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The church of Christ, in its idea, attributes, and

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THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST,

IN

ITS IDEA, ATTRIBUTES,

AND

MINISTRY:

WITH A PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO

THE CONTROVERSY ON THE SUBJECT BETWEEN ROMANISTS AND PROTESTANTS.

BY

EDWARD ARTHUR LITTON, M. A.

PERPETUAL CURATE OF STOCKTON HEATH, CHESHIRE,
AND LATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

It having been thought desirable to reprint the following work in America, the Author has availed himself of the opportunity of introducing some alterations and corrections which he trusts will render it more generally useful. Such a revision, however, as he could have wished to bestow upon it, was out of the question, partly, from want of leisure at the present moment, and partly, because more than half of the work was in type before the intention of re-issuing it was communicated to him. He is sensible, therefore, that even now, the work labors under many imperfections, particularly a want of compression in some parts, and a crudeness of statement in others, which, had more time been at his command, he might have hoped to remove, and as it is, he commends it to the candor of the Christian public.

The principal alteration has been the omission of some observations, in the chapter on the sacraments, on infant baptism, or rather on the amount of direct Scripture evidence for the existence of pœdo-baptism in the first age of the Church; and of some others, on the place which circumcision held in the ancient economy, and its consequent relations to baptism under the new. On the latter point, the Author's opinions have undergone a change, and as regards the former, if he still thinks that certain passages have been unduly pressed to deliver a testimony in favor, not of the lawfulness, but, of the Apostolic institution, of infant baptism, he is sincerely desirous of avoiding discussions likely to lead to controversy among those who, in the main, agree with the principles set forth in the work. The conclusions therefore to be drawn from the normal case of Scripture, viz: adult baptism, are simply stated; and it is left to the reader, if he be a

pœdo-baptist, to adjust them to the normal practice of his church. That they can be satisfactorily adjusted to this exceptional case is the Author's full conviction; but to state the argument fully would require some space, and an imperfect statement might lead to misapprehension.

If on the important subject discussed the work should be found in any instance to have promoted sound Scriptural and Protestant views, the Author's object in sending it forth will have been fully attained.

OXFORD, *March* 14, 1856.

S. Douglas Wyeth, Agt., Stereotyper,
No. 7 Pear St., Phila.

PREFACE.

THOUGH it is presumed that the reader will meet with nothing in the following pages but what the title prepares him for, it is very probable that he will look for several topics which, in works of this kind, are commonly discussed, but in the present are omitted. It may be proper, therefore, to state briefly the nature and scope of the work.

The course of the great controversy which has been so long agitating the Church of England must have impressed the attentive observer with the importance of a scientific acquaintance, especially on the part of the clergy, with the fundamental differences between Romanism and Protestantism, as opposite systems of dogmatic theology. This branch of study, so proper to a Protestant Church, had, for various reasons, fallen into neglect, until circumstances, which have become matter of history, forced it upon public attention. Among these reasons may be mentioned the historical, rather than doctrinal, character of our theology — the absence, hitherto at least, in this country of a learned, if not of an agressive, Romanism, such as exists abroad, and there calls forth a corresponding activity on the part of Protestant theologians — and, not least, the indifference, not to say positive aversion, which, since the time of Laud, has been exhibited towards evangelical Protestantism, the real antagonist of Romanism, by a large and influential section of the English clergy.

The consequences of this neglect have been such as might have been expected. In its earlier stages the tractarian movement appeared to have gained a complete triumph on the ground of historical and philosophical disquisition. Men were taken by surprise, and arguments appeared convincing simply because they were not familiar to the minds of those to whom they were addressed. Our younger clergy especially, unversed in the study of the Romish controversy, were seduced in numbers by the attractive, and to them novel, guise in which the reasonings of

Bellarmin and Bossuet were re-produced, and imbibed Romish principles without suspecting the source whence the poison was derived.

That this state of things should continue is neither creditable nor safe. The nation, indeed, has uttered its judgment on the momentous questions at issue with a voice which cannot be mistaken; but, in times like ours, we need something more than the protest of a healthy Christian instinct, such as the laity of this country have given expression to, against the errors of the church system. The adherents of the Reformation, if they would maintain their ground amidst the various opposing influences which surround them, must be prepared, not only to contend zealously for the apostolic faith, but to justify, both to themselves and to others, their adherence thereto. If Protestantism show itself incapable of wielding any other weapons than those of popular declamation, it is to be feared that, in an inquiring age like our own, when every system is undergoing a process of sifting, it will be compelled to abandon the field to its antagonists, whether Romish or rationalistic. In short, an intelligent and scientific study of the doctrinal differences between ourselves and Rome appears to be at the present time peculiarly needful; and if upon any section of our Church this duty seems to be more incumbent than upon others, it is that to which the epithet of evangelical has, whether rightly or wrongly, been attached, and which, as recent events have abundantly shown, is the natural antagonist of Rome.

It may be thought that, the immediate danger which menaced the Church of England having passed away, a discussion of this kind is no longer opportune; but, independently of the subject's being one of permanent and universal interest, it would be a great mistake to suppose that, because the leaders of the movement have passed over to a more congenial territory, the principles which they inculcated with such zeal and success within our own pale have disappeared with them. Those principles, by whatever name they may be called, whether Catholic, or Church, or Sacramental, are still rife amongst us, and in active operation: in truth, the contest between evangelical and ecclesiastical Christianity is as old as the Gospel itself, and may be expected to continue to the end of time. Moreover, it is impossible to overlook the significance of the recent attitude which the Church of Rome has assumed within these dominions. Politically she has experienced a signal repulse; but there is every reason to expect that a systematic assault will be made by theologians of her communion, of a higher

grade than the controversialists best known in this country, on the foundations of Protestantism, which it will need every weapon of argument and research successfully to meet.

To call attention to this field of theological inquiry, hitherto too much neglected amongst us, is the object of the following work. The chief aim of the writer has been to bring out fully to view the ultimate doctrinal principles which lie at the root of each system respectively; and to point out how these principles naturally give rise to the visible results with which the world is familiar. Hence it is that several questions, the determination of which depends chiefly upon an investigation of facts,—such as the alleged supremacy of the Bishop of Rome in the fourth or fifth century, or the alleged invalidity of our English orders—are but briefly touched upon; while an unusually large space is devoted to purely doctrinal discussions. Indeed these discussions may be thought to occupy too large a space by those who do not bear in mind that the topic of the Church is, in fact, an epitome of the whole Romish controversy, all the other differences of view on original sin, justification, and the sacraments, here combining to produce a single result. To this abstract mode of treating the subject the writer has been led, partly from a conviction that too much stress has been laid upon the external, to the overlooking of the interior, points of difference between us and Rome, and partly because our theology is as rich in historical refutations of the pretensions of the Papacy as it is barren in expositions of the doctrinal grounds on which the system rests.

The ground assumed throughout is that of evangelical Protestantism, the Protestantism of Luther, Calvin, and our own reformers, as distinguished from the political, eclectic, and rationalistic systems which, at different times, have taken its place. The latter systems, which often exhibit as wide a divergency from the genuine teaching of the reformers as that of Trent itself, have been frequently tried, and found of no power to withstand the encroachments of the adversary. From the time of Erasmus downwards, the mere negation of Romish doctrine has proved insufficient for this purpose; and if in the conflict which appears to be impending between us and our ancient opponent, we are to come off victorious, it must be by taking our stand on the positive doctrines of the Reformation. But while the writer has been at no pains to conceal the side which he takes, it has been his aim to avoid those one-sided representations of the opposite system, which only repel the candid mind, and, by the reaction of senti-

ment which they occasion, do more injury than good to the cause of truth. To maintain that Romanism is not even a form of Christianity, can serve no good purpose, and is to overlook the essential distinction between faith, however imperfectly informed, and unbelief. A dispassionate impartiality in comparing the system of Trent with our own, and a promptitude to acknowledge whatever merits or defects may exist on each side, are quite compatible with a hearty conviction of the fundamental truth of Protestantism; and these qualities it has been throughout the desire of the writer to cultivate. Indeed, the scientific character of the work would, of itself, have rendered any exaggerated statements, or appeals to popular feeling, out of place.

It is proper to apprize the reader that one division only of the controversy on the subject of the Church — viz. the nature and constitution of the Christian society — is here discussed; the authority of the Church, and the various questions relating to tradition and the rule of faith, not entering into the plan of the work. The arrangement adopted may be briefly stated. In the first book an attempt is made to fix the true idea of the Church — that is, to determine whether it is, as the Romanist would have it, primarily an external institution; or, as Protestantism teaches, a society which has its true being or differentia within. If the discussion should here seem unnecessarily extended, it must be remembered that this question lies at the very root of the controversy, and, moreover, is not often found discussed by our own divines in a satisfactory manner. The second book is devoted to the consideration of the predicates, or attributes, of the Church, as expressed in the Catholic creeds, and in the rival confessions. The third book contains an exposition of the differences between us and Rome on the subject of the Christian ministry. On each head the plan pursued has been, first, to determine from the authenticated statements of each party what the real point at issue is, and then to examine to which side truth inclines.

With respect to the labours of the learned in this department of theology, it has already been observed that amongst ourselves it has not been much cultivated. We have treatises against Romanism in abundance, but it has not occurred to the writer to meet with any work in English theology (Bishop Marsh's small treatise excepted) the professed object of which is to institute a scientific comparison between the doctrinal confessions of the two great sections of the Christian world. Neither does the valuable work of Field on the Church, nor the more recent treatise of Mr

Palmer, supply this defect: the latter work, indeed, though containing much valuable information, is by no means calculated to introduce the reader to an acquaintance with the essential points of difference between Romanists and Protestants. Abroad the case has been different. The labours of the philosophical school of Romanists, represented by Moehler, De Maistre, and others, have had the effect, especially in Germany, of calling into the field many eminent theologians of the opposite party; among whom may be mentioned Baur, Neander, and Nitzsch. No one can peruse the writings of either side without profit; and to Nitzsch's excellent reply to Moehler, in particular, the present writer desires to acknowledge his obligations for some of the profoundest remarks on the opposite systems which this age has produced.

A copious table of contents — or rather analysis of the work — has been prefixed, which, it is hoped, will also serve the purpose of an index.

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THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST,

&c.

INTRODUCTION.

THE controversy on the subject of the Church, as a distinct topic of theology, owes its existence, like the other questions in dispute between Romanists and Protestants, to the great religious movement of the sixteenth century. Admitting this, we must, however, be on our guard against the common, but erroneous, supposition, that the sentiments which upon this, as well as the other points of controversy, found a mouth-piece in Luther and Melancthon, and were afterwards embodied in the Protestant confessions, had been, up to that time, unknown among Christians, and were subjective peculiarities of the first Reformers. The truth is, that, from the very first, Romanist and Protestant tendencies simultaneously manifested themselves, and are found to co-exist, not only within the pale of the same Catholic Church but in the same individual minds; of which, as regards the particular topic under discussion, the nature and constitution of the Church, Augustin, in his writings against the Donatists, is a remarkable instance. It is hard to say which of the great contending parties of Christendom can claim this eminent Father as their own; and if candour compels us to admit that, on the whole, the Tridentine theory finds the greater measure of support in his writings, Protestantism can still appeal to them as affording a confirmation of its own teaching upon more than one of the questions which have been raised concerning the nature of the Church. In like manner, Tertullian and Jerome may, on the subject of the Christian ministry, be made to speak the language both of Protestantism and Romanism, according as each party selects from their writings

what it finds most accordant with its own system. In saying, then, that the controversy on the subject of the Church is the product of the Reformation, we must be understood as only affirming that it then assumed a formal shape, and became one of the leading points around which the differences of the two systems ranged themselves. Before that era, the opposite tendencies, though clearly traceable up to the very age of the Apostles, had not yet worked themselves out to their respective results; nor had the dominant body, calling itself the Church, become fully alive to their essential incompatibility. No formal decision having as yet abridged the sphere of discursive thought, theologians, according as they inclined more to (what afterwards was called) the Protestant, or the Romish, version of Christianity, took different sides, and were permitted a considerable degree of latitude in their teaching. Hence the appeal of the first Reformers to a general council, as the most effectual method of bringing the points at issue between themselves and their opponents to a satisfactory settlement: they affirmed that they were contending, not against the Catholic Church, but against the Papal party in the Church. Nothing can be more contrary to fact than the assertion which has been made, that Protestantism can find no trace of itself in ancient Christianity.*

The explanation of the fact which thus meets us in the pages of Church history, is to be found in the facility with which antagonistic doctrines will often repose side by side in the mind of the individual Christian, or in the Church at large, until circumstances occur to bring out their intrinsic opposition. Of this, the controversy on the relation of divine grace to human agency may be adduced as an instance. It may seem to Protestants unaccountable how Augustin, for example, could have been able to reconcile his views upon this point with those which he ordinarily, though by no means uniformly, maintains on the constitution of the Church; yet it is certain that he was unconscious of any contrariety between the two. The same writer who, in controversy with the Pelagians, speaks not only as a Protestant, but as a Protestant of the reformed type as distinguished from the Lutheran, is found, when discussing topics connected with the Church, following out fully the principles of Cyprian; principles which only needed time and culture to develope themselves into the Church system of the middle ages. The same juxta-position of mutually repulsive tendencies appears in some of Augustin's successors, and even in the

* Newman's Essay on Development, p. 6.

Schoolmen. The readiest way of explaining the apparent inconsistency, is to suppose that, in the case of these eminent teachers of the ancient Church, the relative bearings towards each other of the Augustinian doctrines of grace, and of those of the Church system, had not as yet been subjected to the action of the logical faculty: as Churchmen, they threw themselves into the system in which they had been nurtured, while as Christians they drew their spiritual nutriment from the Scriptures; and, for a time, the heterogeneous elements of their religious life were intermingled, though they could not coalesce. Of course, this state of things could not last always. When antagonistic principles form part of the same system, a collision, though circumstances may retard it, becomes at length inevitable; and the weaker is expelled by the more powerful. So it has occurred in the Romish Church, with respect to the particular doctrines with which Augustin's name is associated. It has at length been perceived that they are out of place in the Tridentine system. The affinity between Pelagianism and the hierarchical theory has come to light, and is recognised. The consequence is, that the doctrines which were once tolerated are now deemed heretical; and the history of Jansenism proves how much more clearly, since the Council of Trent brought out the Romish dogmas into distinct shape, the papal theologians have perceived what is compatible, and what is not, with their system, than did their predecessors who lived before the Reformation.

It must also be borne in mind, that, while, undoubtedly, it was the Reformation that gave rise to a Protestant, as distinguished from a Romish, doctrine of the Church, the controversy upon this subject was by no means the real spring of the movement. The Protestant conception of the Church follows naturally from the doctrine of justification by faith, and must sooner or later have been arrived at by the Reformers: it was the latter doctrine, however, that constituted the original ground of contention between Luther and his opponents, and neither party was at first aware of its pregnant consequences. The German Reformer had, as is well known, no notion, when he first opposed the sale of indulgences, of questioning, either the authority of the Pope, or the soundness of the ecclesiastical system in which he had been bred. Long before he emerged from the convent of Erfurth, he had become possessed, by the perusal of Scripture, of the distinctive doctrine of the gospel: but, at that period of his life, he was unconscious of its incompatibility with the received notions on the subject of the Church. Rejoicing in the peace it had brought to his own

conscience, and satisfied with the liberty which he enjoyed of proclaiming it to others, he preached justification by faith, that is, the free forgiveness of sin to all believers, in the wooden chapel of Wittemberg; nor once suspected that the truths which he drew from the fountain of the living word, so long sealed up, and expounded to his admiring auditory, were irreconcilable with the other doctrines of Romanism, to which, as yet, he gave his full adhesion. At that time, he was a Romanist, preaching Protestant doctrine. In the simplicity of his heart, he believed that he was advancing nothing but what was agreeable to the mind of the Church; for how could it be supposed that she would teach contrary to the word of God? At this early period of his history, Rome had no more devoted adherent than Luther; and doubtless, if providential circumstances had not ordered it otherwise, he would have lived and died, like many a pious monk before him, a professed Romanist, but a Protestant at heart. It was not, however, destined to be so. The system of indulgences, carried out into practice in its grossest form, roused the monk of Wittemberg to a vivid consciousness of the import of the great truth which had become the nutriment of his spiritual life: he protested publicly against the scandal; but still without any intention of impugning the authority of the rulers of the Church. At this critical moment, it hung in suspense whether or not there would be a real, and effective, reformation. Things had come to such a pass as to be no longer endurable by the growing intelligence of the nations of Western Christendom; and intimations, not to be mistaken, were given from various quarters, that the Church must either voluntarily reform herself, or submit to be reformed. Had her rulers, at Luther's first appearance, possessed the most ordinary share of prudence, had they been able to discern the signs of the times, they would, by timely concessions, have endeavoured to avert the coming storm: they would have corrected the most prominent abuses complained of, which they might easily have done, and yet have left the principles whence those abuses sprang untouched. But infatuation had fallen upon the papal party. Forgetting the vast impulse which the invention of printing, and the revival of letters, had communicated to the European mind, and shutting their eyes to the unequivocal symptoms of a growing religious sense around them, Leo X. and his counsellors had recourse to the expedient, which his predecessors had found so effectual, of interposing the shield of papal infalibility between the corruptions of the Church and their assailants. Instead, there-

fore, of joining issue with Luther on the practice itself which had called forth his opposition, the emissaries of Rome cut short all discussion with the remark, that indulgences, having been instituted by the Pope in accordance with the teaching of the Scholastic doctors, were now a matter of faith, and, as such, must be received with unquestioning submission. It was then that, for the first time, Luther began to entertain doubts respecting the validity of the Papal claim of infallibility. Refusing to submit to so summary a settlement of the question, he appealed from the authority of the Pope to that of a general council. He soon, however, discovered that little was hereby gained; for the question immediately presented itself, According to what standard of doctrine, and in dependence upon what authorities, was such a council to frame its decisions? The advocates of the Papacy might perhaps have consented to submit the question in dispute to a council in which, as heretofore, the Papal constitutions, and the Scholastic theology, should be the guiding lights; but Luther, who was well acquainted with the spirit of that theology, felt, with increasing clearness of conviction as his views of scriptural truth became more extended, that in such an assembly his cause would be lost. His next demand, therefore, was for a council in which Holy Scripture should be recognised as the touchstone of doctrinal statements; a demand which, as manifestly striking at the root of the received doctrine concerning the authority of the Church, was at once rejected by Rome.*

It was thus that the formal principle of Protestantism, viz. the supreme authority of Scripture in matters of faith, was gradually arrived at; not, as may be supposed, without many a severe struggle on Luther's part against early prepossessions. It has been often alleged that, in entering the lists with Rome, he was actuated by an impatience of legitimate authority, or other unworthy motives; but the authentic records in which he so graphically describes the mental effort which it cost him to appear as an opponent of the Papal chair sufficiently refute the assertion. Had but permission been given him to teach unmolested the doctrines which he found in Scripture, he would gladly have continued in communion with the bishop of Rome: it was by the force of circumstances that he was driven first to examine, and then to reject, the whole

* Ceux qui avoient embrassé les opinions de Luther demandoient le concile, à condition que tout y fût décidé par le saint Ecriture, à l'exclusion de toutes les constitutions des Papes et de la théologie Scolastique; étant bien assurés que c'étoit le moyen de défendre leur doctrine. — Sarpi, *Hist. du Conc. de Trente*, translated by Courayer, p. 38.

system of which the Papacy is but the efflorescence. At the same time, when once the principle had been enunciated, that Scripture is the supreme authority in controversies of faith, the breach between the Papal and the Protesting party became irreparable; for it was no longer a contest about this or that doctrine, but about the authoritative source of all doctrines: and from this time forward, Protestantism began to assume the appearance of an independent system of doctrine, in opposition to that of Rome. The interior links which connect one truth with another became the subject of investigation; theological statements were so shaped as to square with the leading doctrine of the system; and, one by one, the chief topics in controversy assumed, under the guidance of Scripture, that scientific form in which they appear in the Reformed confessions. There were not wanting minds fitted for this peculiar task. The Lutheran party had early attracted to itself men of high literary attainments, and genuine philosophical spirit; foremost amongst whom stood Melancthon, the first to mould the theology of the Reformation, as Luther was the instrument of exhibiting its inner spirit. Those living truths which Luther felt more vividly than he could expound clearly, it was Melancthon's province to state formally, to harmonise, and to defend. As early as the year 1521, he had given to the world a short exposition, according to Protestant views, of the chief heads of Christian doctrine, under the title of *Loci theologici:* it was subsequently expanded into the fuller, and more complete, system of theology which appears under that name in the collected edition of his works. From his pen proceeded, a few years afterwards, the *Confession of Augsburg*, and the classical *Apology for the Confession;* compositions which were adopted as the symbols of the Lutheran Church, and in which Protestantism, for the first time, appears, not merely as a protest against the corruptions of Rome, which is its negative side, but, as a positive system, possessing an organising principle of its own, and not less coherent in its structure than the opposite theology of the Council of Trent. The Confession of Augsburg may be considered as the basis of all the other Protestant symbols. Our Thirty-nine Articles were, as is well known, framed after the model which it furnishes, though in some points they exhibit a Reformed, rather than a Lutheran, type. For the service which Melancthon thus rendered to the Lutheran Protestants, the Reformed Churches of France and Switzerland were indebted to Calvin: in whose celebrated work, *Institutes of Religion*, we possess a masterly treatise on dogmatical theology,

tinged, however, with the peculiar views of the great Swiss Reformer. This work exercised a wide-spread, and lasting, influence wherever the Reformed faith was professed; and can never be read without exciting admiration, on account of the comprehensiveness of plan, the clearness of statement, and the generally judicious treatment of the topics discussed, which it exhibits.

It will be easily conceived that the gradual consolidation of Protestantism, both as a theological system and as a dissident Church, could not take place without producing important effects on the opposite side. In truth, the Lutheran Reformation gave rise, not only to a counter-reformation of a most extensive character in the practical system of the Romish Church, but to a fixing of those dogmatical foundations of the edifice which had hitherto existed as *disjecta membra*, and had been tacitly assumed rather than distinctly propounded.* Tridentine Romanism no more resembles the popular working of the system in the 16th century, than the Romanism of England is a fair specimen of that which prevails in less favoured countries. In one point of view, the Council conferred a real and lasting benefit upon the Church, while in another it must be regarded as the grand impediment to her return to apostolic Christianity: it reformed innumerable abuses, and aimed, not without success, at introducing, among clergy and laity, a much higher tone of Christian practice than had previously prevailed; but, at the same time, by transforming, in avowed opposition to the Protestant statements, doctrinal opinions, which had not hitherto received a formal sanction, into authoritative decisions of the Church, it placed an insuperable barrier between the two great divisions of Christendom, and stereotyped, so to speak, the errors of the Church system.

But while the Romanism of Trent is as much the product of the Reformation as Protestantism itself, the questions concerning the Church hold a different place in the two systems, as regards the historical formation of each respectively. While in Protestantism it is the inward aspect of Christianity, as consisting of certain relations between the individual Christian and God, expressed in the formula "justification by faith," that pervades the system, and is the key to the understanding of it, in Romanism this governing, formative, influence belongs to its idea of the Church. Protestantism first seized hold of the doctrine which expresses the

* The lengthened discussions, the differences of opinion, and the difficulty in framing its decrees, which prevailed in the Council of Trent, prove how far the dogmatical elements of Romanism were at that time from being positively fixed.—See Sarpi's *History*, passim.

method in which the sinner, viewed as an individual, becomes reconciled to God; and therefrom, as a fixed point, proceeded to modify, or reject, the current notions respecting the nature and authority of the Christian community. Romanism, on the contrary, assuming the received doctrines on the subject of the Church as a first principle, aimed at giving those connected with the spiritual life of the individual such a form as should make them harmonise with the former. Hence, possibly, it is that the Council of Trent has no distinct section upon the Church; but however this may be, it is certain that the views peculiar to Romanism, on original sin, regeneration, and justification, are, not the antecedents, but the consequents of the doctrine which it maintains upon the constitution of the Church; the latter being the organizing principle of the whole system. Not only does this appear from a critical examination of the Romish formularies in their present shape, but from the historical facts connected with the rise and progress of the Papal system.

The remains of ancient ecclesiastical literature, especially those of the Latin Church, teach us that the great corruption of Christianity, of which Romanism is the full development, manifested itself, in the first instance, not in the doctrines which relate to the spiritual life of the individual, but in those connected with the constitution and authority of the Christian society. As it had been predicted by St. Paul, the decline from apostolic Christianity began with the introduction of two foreign elements — the ascetic discipline, and the doctrine of a human priesthood; the one of heathen, and the other of Jewish, origin; and these had taken deep root, and thoroughly impregnated the mind of the Church, long before any unscriptural views on the subject of justification were visible; at least before any such had been authoritatively propounded. The enemy sowed his tares stealthily, and with admirable wisdom. The great doctrine of the gospel, so far as the latter is a scheme for bringing God and man together, was, for the present, left untouched; but, side by side with it, there were silently introduced notions on the nature and offices of the Church, in conjunction with which it never has existed, or can exist, in its original simplicity, and which it must either expel or be expelled by. The latter result took place by a slow, but necessary, process. Already in the pages of Cyprian, and even Augustin, the effect of the Church system upon their apprehension of the truths which St. Paul so earnestly preached is very visible; and yet it is more negative than positive, more in the way of omission than of actual

misstatement. The doctrine of human merit, in the gross form which it assumed in later Romanism, does not appear in their writings; but the opposite truth is seldom, if ever, heartily announced, still less does it occupy that place in their theology which the Apostolic writings assign to it. In the lapse of time, as the Church theory approached its maturity, this mere omission of Scriptural truth gave place to positively erroneous notions: and, under the fostering influence of the Scholastic theology, the Tridentine teaching on the subjects of original sin, on justification, and on the merit of good works, assumed its present form. We may say, then, that in Romanism the doctrine of the Church holds the same place which the doctrine of justification by faith does in Protestantism: each constitutes the heart of its own system, each is the fundamental principle, with a continual reference to which the work of theological reflection and analysis has, on either side, proceeded.

From the foregoing observations it will be seen that the Protestant, were it his object to expound his own dogmatical system in accordance with the actual course of its historical formation, would naturally begin by establishing the doctrine of justification by faith; and from this, as from a fixed position, advance to the consideration of the other topics in dispute between himself and his opponents, pointing out, as he proceeds, the relation which they bear to each other, and to the central truth of the system. Such, indeed, is the method commonly pursued by Protestant writers on dogmatic theology. Following in the track of the Apostles' Creed, they treat, first, of the great objective truths of Christianity, such as the nature of the Divine Being and the Person and work of Christ; then, of the actual application of redemption to individuals, or the doctrines of regeneration and justification; and, in the last place, of the Church, or the community of those who are justified, and made children of God by adoption and grace. The Romanist, on the contrary, if he would do justice to his cause, must, first of all, make good his positions respecting the Church, its constitution and its powers; and, from the vantage ground thus furnished, proceed to expound the other distinctive doctrines of the Tridentine system. This was clearly perceived at the Council of Trent,* and has in general been acted upon by writers

* "Vincent Lunel, Franciscain, fut d'avis qu'avant que d'établir pour fondemens de la foi l'Ecriture, et la Tradition, il falloit traiter de l'Eglise, qui est le fondement principal de tout, puisque c'est d'elle que l'Ecriture reçoit son autorité, selon cette parole si célèbre de S. Augustin, 'Qu'il ne croiroit point à l'Evangile, s'il n' y étoit obligé par l'autorité de l'Eglise.'" — Sarpi, i. 260.

of the Romish communion. It is not without a sense of the disadvantage to the argument thence arising, that, in the following pages, issue is joined with the Romish controversialist upon the subject of the Church, before the Protestant doctrine of justification has been expounded, and its connexion with the former topic pointed out.—On the other hand, if the object be to select the cardinal point of the controversy between Romanists and Protestants as that which should be first discussed, then both parties must agree in assigning that position to the subject before us. Not to mention that, in all discussions concerning the application of redemption to individuals, the existence of the Church must be presupposed, for it is by means of the Church, as an instrument, that the work of Christ is carried on in the world; and that, under this head of controversy, the essential differences of the two systems reach their culminating point, and assume their most decided aspect of opposition; it is, obviously, but reasonable that the great question concerning the source of revelation and the ultimate authority in matters of faith, should be settled, before an attempt is made to determine what is, and what is not, the pure doctrine of Christ. But it is plain that this question cannot be discussed without a continual reference to the conception which each party respectively entertains of the nature and authority of the Church, and of its relation to Scripture. In making good his doctrine concerning the Church, the Romanist virtually proves all the other dogmas of his system; and even the Protestant cannot satisfactorily set forth the proof of his formal principle viz. the supreme authority of Scripture in matters of faith, without touching upon the characteristics of that spiritual society which existed before the New Testament was written, to which the Christian Scriptures were addressed, and between which, as the "witness and keeper" of the Divine Word and the Word itself, there is a divinely established connexion which never can be safely dissolved. To this we may add, that it is as embodied in a living Church system that Romanism has ever produced the greatest impression upon nations, and individuals. On this side chiefly it is, that the system of Trent has exhibited its power to draw over to itself the unstable, and the ill-informed. In fact, if we examine the history of the various cases of conversion to Romanism which have occurred amongst ourselves, we shall find that, in almost every instance, it was the imposing aspect which the Church of Rome presents, as a visibly organised body under one visible head, and the pretensions which she puts forward to

a divine commission to pronounce authoritatively upon questions of doctrine, that principally weighed with the converts, and led them to take the step which they have taken. These pretensions, on the other hand, are the real impediment in the way of a reconciliation between the two great divisions of Christendom: it is against the claims of the Church of Rome, as *a church*, that Protestants must go on protesting, until they are abandoned. A Church may be disfigured by serious corruptions in doctrine and in practice, but as long as it does not claim for itself infallibility, that is, make its very corruptions part and parcel of Christianity, there is hope of its being reformed; and, meanwhile, its imperfections may, and indeed ought to be, borne with by those bred within its pale. The abuses of the ecclesiastical system of the sixteenth century, grievous as they were, would not of themselves have justified the Protestants in separating from the communion of Rome. But when the claim to infallibility was authoritatively put forth, and the plainest practical abuses thereby invested with a character of immutability, and even of sanctity, no alternative was left to those who had become convinced that the practices in question *were* corruptions but to secede from her communion. The same claim, which has not as yet been abandoned, interposes, at this day, an impassable barrier between us and Rome. On the whole, then, a comparative view of the two systems will most fitly commence with a discussion of their differences on the subject of the Church.

These preliminary observations upon the historical bearings of the subject about to be discussed, conduct us to an important inquiry, without some notice of which it would be improper to advance further;—viz. What are the authentic sources whence we are to derive our knowledge of Romanism and Protestantism, respectively?

It will be obvious, on a moment's reflection, that Scripture is not, directly, one of these sources. Scripture is the common treasure of all Christians; the common record which both parties recognise, and wherein each thinks it discovers the peculiarities of its own system. For no Romanist has as yet advanced so far as to admit that Scripture is opposed to the doctrines of his Church; at most, he maintains that it is an imperfect, or an obscure, record of the Christian faith, and needs the aid of tradition, or development, to supply its deficiencies. Scripture, too, from its structure, and from the place which it holds, or ought to hold, in the Church, is manifestly unfitted, as it was never intended, to furnish us with

dogmatical expositions of the Christian faith, much less of the faith of any party in the Church. The Church had her faith within, and could have given expression to it, before the New Testament was written:—the latter was added, to be a perpetual touchstone, or standard, whereby she is to try her faith, and correct any deviations which it may exhibit from the spirit of Apostolic Christianity. Scripture, therefore, is not a protest against certain specific errors, whether Romanist or Protestant, but against all forms of error, which may, to the end of time, prevail in the Church. The very place of supremacy which the Word of God holds in the Church, unfits it to be the symbol of any party:—it presents a record not so much of what the Church does, as of what she ought to, believe; it exhibits the pure pattern of Apostolic Christianity, to which all churches should endeavour to conform themselves. The Protestant, therefore, will search in vain in Scripture for a dogmatical exposition of the points in which he differs from the Church of Rome, just as he will in vain search there for a categorical expression of his faith, as it is opposed to Arian and Socinian errors. Both in the one case and in the other, he will feel himself bound to *prove* from Scripture what he holds as matter of faith, but he cannot, as a Protestant or as a Trinitarian, take Scripture immediately, and say, This is an exposition of what I believe. It is also to be remembered, that, to claim Scripture directly as a record of what we hold in opposition to Romanism, is, not only to detract from the sacredness of the inspired writings, but to affirm that we have succeeded in reproducing amongst ourselves a perfect representation of Apostolic purity, both in doctrine and practice; an assumption which we are not justified in making. To be continually approximating to the idea of a Church presented in Scripture is our bounden duty; but it is not permitted us to say that we have actually reached that ideal; for this would be equivalent to making the imperfections under which our system may be labouring part of Scripture itself. We must carefully limit the sense of the celebrated aphorism, "The Bible alone is the religion of Protestants," or we shall possibly be led into dangerous error: for it is a dangerous error to affiliate our particular creed directly upon Scripture, so as to make the latter responsible, not only for every sentiment therein expressed but, even for the form of words in which it is expressed. If, by the aphorism above-mentioned, be meant, that the Bible is with Protestants the ultimate authority in matters of faith, its truth is undeniable; for whatever we hold as Protestants we hold

because we believe it can be proved by Holy Scripture: but if the meaning intended to be conveyed be, that Scripture is Protestantism, and Protestantism Scripture, the assertion is not true, and what is more, is an unwarrantable assumption. Protestantism, as a system of doctrine, may have many defects which need, like the errors of Romanism, to be corrected by a reference to Scripture. The Inspired Word itself must be jealously guarded from such an identification with theological systems, which have been built up by the operation of the logical faculty, as would place both on the same footing of authority.

Equally obvious is it, indeed it need hardly be observed, that the three œcumenical creeds contribute nothing towards enabling us to ascertain the distinctive doctrines of the Romish, and the Reformed, Churches. They, like Scripture, are the common property of both parties,—the expression of their common Christianity,—the ground upon which they must both unite against the common enemy—Rationalism, or infidelity. An agreement of both parties in the great objective truths of Christianity, as expressed in the creeds, must be pre-supposed, if we are to understand clearly the point of divergence:—otherwise, we shall be wasting our time in contending about first principles. Protestants may not arrive at their belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures, or of the doctrines expressed in the creed, by the same road which Romanists take; but if they do accept the Scriptures as the Word of God, and the doctrine of the Trinity as part of that Word, it is enough: it is comparatively of little consequence *how* they came by their faith. Romish controversialists are constantly forgetting this, and asking us, how we prove the inspiration of Scripture, &c.? They might as well go back further, and ask us how we prove the existence of a God. There is a certain portion of ground common to both parties, to dispute about which is wholly irrelevant to the questions on which they are really divided. Moreover, for either party to adopt the three creeds as its symbol, is to ignore the existence of its opponent. If we choose to forget that the Reformed and the Romish Churches are existing realities, and imagine ourselves to be living in the 4th century, we may adopt this course; otherwise, it is an illusion, and a dangerous one. The supposition upon which it is really based is, that there are no essential differences between Romanism and Protestantism, or, in other words, that we may reunite ourselves to the Church of Rome, without forfeiting our position as a Protestant Church. Nothing can be more suicidal than the attempts which have been made in certain

quarters to substitute, as the symbol of the English Church, the three creeds for the thirty-nine articles; as if the former comprise everything which distinguishes us as a Church. So far forth as we are a Christian Church, as distinguished from Socinians, Jews, and Mahometans, the ancient creeds are our symbols; but they are not so, so far forth as we are a Reformed Church, for they contain no protest against the peculiar errors of Rome.

Nor, again, are we warranted in regarding the *private writings* of the reformers or their opponents, whether English or foreign, as authentic sources of information on the differences of the two great sections of Christendom. True it is, that, as *helps* to ascertaining the real points at issue, the writings of Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, and Zuinglius, and of our own reformers, on the one hand, —and of Bellarmin, Bossuet, and Moehler, —on the other, are very valuable: but it is manifest that no statement of any individual writer, however eminent, can in fairness be attributed to the Church to which he belongs, unless indeed the latter have formally adopted it. Had this rule been observed by both parties, how much useless controversy might have been avoided! The Romish theologians are careful to discriminate between the unauthorised speculations of their writers, and the formal decrees of their Church: let them accord to their opponents the same measure of equity which they claim for themselves. If Luther or Calvin have made some rash assertions, what is that to the reformed Churches? those Churches must be judged by their authentic declarations, and by nothing else. Yet so little has this rule of equity been attended to that, in the latest work of any consequence on the Romish side of the controversy, that of Moehler, the citations by which he attempts to justify his description of Protestantism are, for the most part, drawn, not from the accredited formularies of the reformed Churches, but from the works of Luther, Melancthon, and Zuinglius.

To speak of any individual, such as Luther or Calvin, as being the creator of the German, or the Swiss, Protestant Church, is wholly to misunderstand the place which the chief reformers occupied in the movement of the 16th century. In all great revolutions of this kind, whether political or religious, a preparatory work has been long going on, previous to the actual outbreak: passions have been long smouldering, sentiments fermenting in the mass, which only awaited some particular circumstance to call them forth into practical energy. In the ordinary course of things, the office of igniting the train falls to some individual, pro-

videntially raised up and specially qualified for this purpose, in whom the common sentiment embodies itself, and finds a mouth-piece. So it was at the period of the Reformation. For a length of time, the Germanic nations had chafed impatiently under the Papal yoke, and to religious minds the corruptions of the Church had become intolerable. The invention of printing, and the revival of classical learning, had given a decided impulse to liberty of thought. Under such circumstances, when Luther appeared, he appeared, not as a mere individual promulgating peculiar doctrines of his own, but as the embodiment of the feelings which had long pervaded the sounder portion even of the Church itself. If, therefore, it be true that without a Luther the Reformation might not have taken place, it is also true that Luther was not the creator of the Protestant Church: he was quite as much led by, as he led, the spirit of the age. He was merely the appointed instrument of bringing matters to a head; a vent for the expression of sentiments which were becoming more and more general, and difficult of suppression. Hence it is, that while the works of the principal reformers are undoubtedly very valuable, as presenting a view of the interior spirit of Protestantism, they can by no means be considered authentic sources of information respecting the faith of the Protestant Churches. If Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin, were the foremost individuals, still they were but individuals, in the work of reformation. To illustrate, to explain statements otherwise ambiguous, or to supply defects in the authentic formularies, the writings of the reformers may properly be applied; but no argument can be founded upon them. The same observations of course apply to the great writers of the Romish communion. In the works of Bellarmin, for example, much light is thrown upon several points which are either obscurely treated, or wholly passed over, in the symbols of the Romish Church: but the statements of that eminent writer are his own, and his Church must not be held responsible for all that he advances.

The question then recurs, Where shall we find Protestantism and Romanism authentically set forth? There remains but one, and that indeed the true, source of information upon the subject; —viz. the public confessions, or symbols, in which the opposite parties have respectively embodied their sentiments. It will be evident, from what has been said, that nothing can, in fairness, be attributed to either party but what is, either expressly or by fair implication, contained in these symbolical documents. With a

brief mention of the principal of them, both Romanist and Protestant, these introductory remarks shall be brought to a close.

The Church of Rome has, strictly speaking, but one document of a symbolical character, viz. the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. Soon after it became evident that the Protestants of Germany could not be put down by force, men's minds turned to a general council, as the only means left of restoring harmony between the two parties. It has already been mentioned that, at the beginning of the Reformation, Luther and his followers, far from opposing such a measure, appealed from the Pope to a council; an appeal, the justice of which was admitted by the right-minded members of the Papal party. But, partly owing to political obstacles, and partly to the reluctance of the successive Popes, from Adrian to Paul III., to take a step which might endanger the Papal authority, the design was not carried into effect until the year 1545. In that year the Council was solemnly opened at Trent: but, owing to the frequent interruptions which occurred in its sittings, it was not brought to a conclusion until A. D. 1563. It then received the Papal confirmation, and has ever since formed the authoritative exposition of the Romish faith. It was not to be expected that the Protestants would consent to abide by the decisions of a Council, over which the Pope was to preside, and in which the Bishops alone were to have the right of voting: and, though summoned to Trent, none of their leading theologians repaired to the Council.

The decisions of the Council relate, partly to the reformation of practical abuses, and partly to doctrine. Under the former head, many salutary reforms were by it effected,—occasioned, there can be no doubt, by the movement on the other side. The doctrinal statements of the Council consist of "Decrees," which contain the doctrines of the Church positively stated, and "Canons," in which the opposite views are anathematised. It is in these latter clauses that the real points of difference are chiefly to be found; the positive statements of the Council being, for the most part, moderate in their tone.

But though the Church of Rome possesses but one authoritative symbol of faith, there are certain works of the highest authority in her communion, which are very nearly, if not quite, symbolical in their character. Among these, the first place is due to the *Catechism of the Council*, which appeared in the year 1566, soon after the dissolution of that assembly. It had been the intention of the prelates there assembled to draw up a popular exposition of

Romish doctrine, founded upon the Canons of Trent, to serve as a manual for the parochial clergy: but, the Council having been dissolved before the design could be carried into effect, it was given in charge to three eminent prelates to execute the work, which they completed in the year 1566. In a literary point of view, this Catechism possesses great excellencies. It is written in clear and elegant latinity; and without being prolix, embraces every topic of Christian doctrine. It gained, as it well deserved, universal acceptance; and has ever been regarded as only second in authority to the decisions of the Council itself.

Another document, holding the same place as the Catechism, though much inferior in importance, is, the *Professio Fidei Tridentina*. It is merely a short epitome of the chief heads of Tridentine doctrine, cast into the form of a profession of faith; to be subscribed by those who hold cure of souls in the Romish Church.

In proceeding to enumerate the principal confessions of the Protestant Churches, it will not be necessary to enter formally into the differences which exist between those of the Lutheran, and those of the Reformed, Churches. As against Rome, they all agree in certain fundamental particulars.

Of the Lutheran formularies the principal is the *Confession of Augsburg*, the groundwork of all the other Protestant symbols. It was composed by Melancthon, and presented to the diet sitting at Augsburg, by the Protestant princes, as the exposition of their faith. The Romish theologians prepared a reply, entitled a *Confutation of the Confession*, which drew from Melancthon a second, and much more extended, apologetic statement, entitled, *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession;* a work of the greatest importance in ascertaining the real points in dispute between the Protestant party and their opponents. The third symbolical book of the Lutheran Churches is, the *Articles of Schmalcald*, prepared by Luther in the expectation of its being presented at a general Council to be held at Mantua; which, however, never took place. Luther's *two Catechisms*, composed for the use of the laity, close the list.

The Reformed Churches differed from the Lutheran in not possessing a common confession recognised by all; each Church framing one for itself, according as it inclined to the views of Calvin or Zuinglius, which on some points, especially the sacraments, were not exactly the same. Of the Reformed Confessions the following, arranged (with the exception of the two Catechisms placed last) in chronological order, are the most important: —

The three Helvetic Confessions. The first of these, commonly called the second, appeared at Basle, A. D. 1536. In the year 1566, the same confession, much enlarged, was given to the world, in the name, and with the sanction, of the Swiss Churches, those only of Basle and Neufchatel excepted. The third Helvetic Confession, by some considered the most ancient of all the Protestant symbols, was composed by Oswald Myconius, the friend of Zuinglius and Œcolampadius, A. D. 1529.*

The Scotch Confession; the work probably of John Knox. It appeared at Edinburgh, A. D. 1560.

The French Confession (*Confessio Gallicana*); presented by Theodore Beza, in the name of the French Reformed Churches, to Charles IX., A. D. 1561. It was afterwards formally adopted at a national Synod, held at Rochelle, 1571.†

The Thirty-nine Articles of the English Church.

The Belgic Confession; sanctioned by various Synods, the last of which took place in 1619.

The Polish Confession, which goes by the name of *Declaratio Thorunensis.* It was drawn up in 1645, with the view of effecting a reconciliation between the Romish, Lutheran, and Reformed Churches of Poland; and is perhaps, of all the Protestant confessions, the most carefully worded and instructive.

The Heidelberg Catechism: composed by command of the Elector Palatine, Frederic III., A. D. 1563. It was received by the Reformed Churches with universal approbation, and in many of them was used as a manual for schools.

The Genevan Catechism; drawn up by Calvin, A. D. 1545. Like the former, it gained a place in the Swiss Churches as a manual of instruction for youth.

* See Augusti's "Corpus Lib. Symb. Eccles. Ref." p. 628.
† Ib. p. 629.

BOOK I.

THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH.

PART I.

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION AT ISSUE.

CHAPTER I.

DECLARATIONS OF THE ROMISH AND PROTESTANT FORMULARIES.

In this first chapter, such portions of the Romish and Protestant formularies, whether formal definitions or indirect statements, as may enable us to collect what the idea, or conception, of the Church is which each party respectively frames to itself, shall be laid, at some length, before the reader, whose indulgence is craved while this irksome, but necessary, task is gone through. The clauses in italics are those in which the point of divergency between the two parties is most prominently expressed.

The Council of Trent, — acting perhaps on the suggestion of some of the theologians present at it, viz. that the authority of the Church should be treated as a ruled point,* — observes a comparative silence upon the article of the Church; at least, presents us with

* "D'autres tenant pour certain et incontestable que par l'Eglise il falloit entendre l'ordre ecclésiastique, et surtout le concile, et le Pape qui en est le chef, disoient que l'autorité de l'Eglise se devoit tenir pour décidée, et que d'en traiter à présent, ce seroit donner lieu de croire, ou qu'il y avoit sur cela des difficultés, ou au moins que c'étoit une vérité nouvellement éclaircie, et qui n'avoit pas toujours été crue dans l'Eglise chrétienne." (Sarpi, tom. i. p. 261.) This is the reason why in the discussions of the great systematic writers of the middle ages, the schoolmen for example, the Church, as such, has no distinct place assigned it. Living under the system, and without an antagonist Protestantism, it never occurred to them to be necessary to explain, or defend it.

no distinct statements or definitions upon the subject. But the Catechism of the Council supplies the deficiency, and gives us a full and accurate exposition of the Romish theory. Commenting on the article of the Apostles' Creed, "The Holy Catholic Church," it observes:* — "That the subject is, for a twofold reason, an important one; first, because the prophets, as Augustin remarks, speak more fully and clearly concerning the Church than concerning Christ himself: and, secondly, because a due understanding of this article is the best safeguard against heresy; heresy being, not error merely, but error obstinately persisted in, in defiance of the decisions of the Church." After various observations upon the meaning of the word *ecclesia*, the distinction between it and the synagogue, and the figures "full of mystery," by which it is described in Scripture, the Catechism proceeds as follows:† — "The Church, according to St. Augustin's definition, is the body of the faithful, dispersed throughout the world; a definition, however, which is hardly comprehensive enough, inasmuch as the Church consists of two parts; the one triumphant, consisting of the spirits of the departed faithful, the other militant, comprehending the faithful upon earth: which, however, together, constitute one and the same Church. *In the Church militant two kinds of men are comprised, the good and the evil;* for though they differ in their life and conversation, *both are believers* (*fideles*), *as professing the same faith, and partaking of the same sacraments.*‡ The good may be discerned, though not with unerring certainty, by their fruits: hence (it is remarked in a note) our Lord, when he commands us to 'hear the Church,' could not have meant that part of it which consists of the good; for since this part cannot be certainly ascertained, we should, were this his meaning, be at a loss to know to whose judgment we must have recourse. The Church, therefore, comprehends both good and bad, agreeably to what Scripture says, 'There is one body and one Spirit.'§ With respect to the visibility of the Church, it is 'like a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid.' *For since it rightfully claims the obedience of all men, it must, of necessity, be a conspicuous*

* Catechism. Conc. Trid. c. x. s. 1. Accurate editions, both of this work, and of the decrees of the Council, will be found in Streitwolf's *Lib. Symbol. Eccles. Cathol.*

† s. 8.

‡ "Jam in ecclesiâ militante duo sunt hominum genera, bonorum et improborum. Et improbi quidem eorundem sacramentorum participes, eandem quoque quam boni fidem profitentur, vita ac moribus dissimiles." (s. 10.)

§ The reader will observe the curious turn which the Catechism gives to this passage; as if it was St. Paul's meaning that the unity of the Church consists in her comprehending all sorts of men within her pale.

object, and easily known."* With a view no doubt of obviating objections to this last statement, the Catechism again reminds us, that both good and evil are comprehended in the Church; according to those parables of our Lord which represent it as a net containing good and bad fish, and as a threshing floor in which chaff and wheat are found mixed together. It is admitted, however, that although good and evil are equally members of the Church, a difference exists between them, analogous to that which exists between the living and the dead members of the human body. (s. 11.)

From all this it follows that three classes of persons only are excluded from the Church; unbelievers (*i. e.* heathens, or infidels), separatists, whether they be heretics or schismatics, and the excommunicated.† With respect to the second class, however (heretics and schismatics), we are told that, although not in the Church, they are still under its jurisdiction: in consequence of which they may be brought to judgment, anathematised, and punished. With the exception of these three classes, *all, however wicked they may be, must be held to be in the Church*:‡ and it is to be especially inculcated upon the faithful that the bishops of the Church, should they happen to lead vicious lives, forfeit thereby none of their spiritual prerogatives.

These statements will receive illustration from what the Catechism says concerning the properties or affections which belong to the Church. These, as expressed in the Apostles' Creed, are three:—Unity, Sanctity, and Catholicity: to which the Nicene Creed adds another, Apostolicity. "The Church is one, because, as the Apostle says, there is 'one faith, one Lord, one baptism;' but, more especially, because it has one invisible Ruler, Christ, and one visible, viz. the occupant, for the time being, of the chair of St. Peter at Rome.§ That this visible head of the Church is necessary to preserve its unity is affirmed by all the Fathers. (Jerome, Cyprian, Optatus, and Basil, are especially referred to as

* "Nam cum illi ab omnibus parendum sit, cognoscatur necesse est." (s. 11.)

† "Ex quo fit, ut tria tantummodo hominum genera ab ea excludantur, primo infideles, deinde hæretici et schismatici, et postremo excommunicati." (s. 12.)

‡ "De cæteris autem, quamvis improbis et sceleratis hominibus, adhuc eos in ecclesia perseverare dubitandum non est." (s. 12.)

§ The language of the Catechism in this place is rather obscure: "Unus est enim ejus rector, et gubernator, invisibilis quidem Christus,—visibilis autem is qui Romanam cathedram Petri Apostolorum principis legitimus successor tenet." (ss. 14, 15.) The idea apparently intended to be conveyed is, that there is one head and governor (rather government), consisting of two persons—Christ and the Pope; the latter being the visible organ of the unseen Saviour, and his vicar upon earth. And such in truth, is the Romish doctrine of the Papacy.

maintaining this opinion). Should it be objected that one head, Christ, is sufficient for one body, the reply is, *that a visible Church must have a visible Head;* that our Lord, therefore, while himself governing it inwardly (invisibly) by His Spirit, rules it visibly by His appointed Vicar upon earth; in the first instance Peter, and afterwards the successor, for the time being, of St. Peter in the Romish See.

"The next property is Sanctity. The Church is called holy for the reasons following:—First, because *it is dedicated to God; so the vessels of the tabernacle, though things inanimate, were called holy, as being set apart to God's service.* It need not be matter of surprise to any one that the Church, which, as has been remarked, comprises in itself the evil as well as the good, should, notwithstanding, be termed holy; for *to that appellation all are entitled who profess to believe in Christ, and have received the sacrament of baptism,* although in many things they offend, and act not fully up to their profession.* Thus St. Paul calls the Corinthians saints and sanctified; yet we know that in that Church there were many of whom he was compelled to say that they were 'carnal.' Secondly, because the Church, consisting, as aforesaid, of good and evil mixed together, is united to Christ, the source of all holiness, as the human body is to the head: and Augustin well remarks, 'If all who believe, and have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ, and thus been made members of His body, for such persons to affirm of themselves that they are not holy, were to do injury to the Head Himself, of whom they are members.' Thirdly, because to the Church alone has been committed the administration of the sacraments, through which, as efficient instruments of divine grace, God makes us holy; so that whosoever is truly sanctified, must be found within the pale of the Church.

"The Church is Catholic or universal, because it is diffused throughout the world, embracing within its pale men of all nations and conditions; and also because it comprehends all who have believed, from the beginning, and all who shall believe henceforward, to the end of time. (s. 17.)

"The last of the four attributes is, Apostolicity. The Church

* It should be carefully borne in mind that the Catechism does not here mean merely that even true Christians are not without sin, and in many things come short: that is confessed on all sides: but that men wholly unrenewed in heart, form, in conjunction with the good, one holy Church. The persons who "in multis offendunt et quæ polliciti sunt non præstant" (s. 17.) are not, in the view of the authors of the Catechism, sincere but imperfect Christians, but men destitute of the Spirit of God, and whose lives may be openly vicious.

is termed Apostolic, both because it derives its doctrines from the Apostles, whereby it is enabled to convict heretics of error, and because it is governed by an Apostolic ministry, which is the organ of the Spirit of God. Being thus divinely guided, this Church alone (*i. e.* the Romish) is infallible in matters of faith and practice; and all other Churches, falsely so called, are under the dominion of Satan, and must, of necessity, be affected with the most pernicious errors. (s. 18.)

"The two figures by which, in the Old Testament, the Church was prefigured, are, Noah's Ark, and the city of Jerusalem: both of them expressing the exclusiveness of the one true Church: for out of the Ark there was no safety from the flood, and at Jerusalem alone might sacrifice be lawfully offered." (s. 19.)

If it be asked why the Church, being, according to these statements, so manifestly an object of sight, should form an article of the creed, which is generally understood to refer to things not seen, or objects of faith, the answer is, that "although the Church, so far as it is a community of men consecrated to Christ, is a visible body, yet the *mysteries* (*i. e.* the sacraments) therein celebrated, belong to the sphere of faith: it is by faith that we understand that to the Church, the keys of heaven, and the powers of remitting sin, and of consecrating the body of Christ, have been committed. (s. 21.)

"The explanatory clause appended to this Article in the Apostles' Creed, 'the communion of Saints,' is chiefly to be understood as expressing that participation which all the members of the Church have in her sacraments, and other privileges. There is, however, another sense which it may bear, viz. that whatever holy works are done by any one Christian, appertain and are profitable to all: as in the human body, the image so often used in Scripture to explain the constitution of the Church, 'if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.'" (s. 24.)

Lastly, it is declared, that "they who are in mortal sin, though deprived thereby of the spiritual benefit which is the peculiar privilege of the pious Christian, are still members of the body of Christ; and, as such, possess privileges from which they are excluded who are altogether cut off from the Church (*i. e.* heretics and schismatics)."*

* "Membra vero mortua, nimirum homines sceleribus obstricti, et a Dei gratiâ alienati, hoc quidem bono non privantur ut hujus corporis (sc. ecclesiæ) membra esse desinant: sed cum sint mortua, fructum spiritualem, qui ad justos et pios homines pervenit, non percipiunt." (s. 27.

Such is a brief analysis of the section of the Romish Catechism which treats of the Church. In proceeding to place side by side with these statements those of the Protestant formularies, we turn, in the first place, to those of the Lutheran Church. In the seventh Article of the Confession of Augsburg, the Church is defined to be, "a congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is purely preached, and the sacraments rightly administered;" a definition which forms the basis of our own nineteenth Article. Both the former and the latter labour under the same ambiguity, or, to speak plainly, confusion, of senses in which the word "Church" is used. "We teach," say the Lutheran Reformers, "that one holy Church shall ever be in the world: but the Church is a congregation of Saints," &c.; it is evident that here there is an unconscious transition from the "one holy Church" to particular Churches; for the former cannot, especially by Protestants, be described as "a congregation of Saints," or, as our Article has it, "of faithful men," "where the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered." This latter part of the definition plainly applies only to local congregations, or the visible Churches which are composed of such congregations: as indeed is, in our Article, intimated by the addition of the qualifying epithet "visible," which does not appear in the Lutheran confession.* In the English version of our Article, however, there remains a slight inaccuracy, which somewhat perplexes the meaning of it, and, indeed, might, if the scope of the whole were not manifest, be productive of serious doctrinal error. In that version, the Article commences with the words, "The visible Church," which, taken literally, imply that there is one visible Church, and only one, in the world: a doctrine which is directly opposed to Scripture, and against which it was one of the professed purposes of our Articles to place on record a protest. There can be little doubt that the true rendering of the Latin, "Ecclesia visibilis," is not "The," but "A," "visible Church:" and this accords much better with the conclud-

* The language of the Saxon confession, drawn up by Melancthon, A. D. 1551, with the intention of being presented to the Council of Trent, and which is styled, "Repetitio Confessionis Augustinæ," is, upon the point under discussion, more accurate than that of the latter. "Dicimus igitur ecclesiam *visibilem* in hâc vita cœtum esse amplectentium evangelium Christi et recte utentium sacramentis; in quo Deus per ministerium evangelii est efficax, et multos ad vitam æternam regenerat; in quo cœtu tamen multi sunt non sancti, &c. Diximus autem in descriptione ecclesiæ multos in hac visibili ecclesia esse non sanctos, qui tamen externa professione veram doctrinam amplectuntur. Improbamus et colluviem Anabaptisticam, quæ fingit ecclesiam visibilem in qua omnes sint sancti; ac fatemur de ecclesia visibili in hac vita sentiendum esse sicut inquit Dominus, Matt. 13, 'Simile est regnum cœlorum sagenæ,' &c."—Conf. Sax. c. 6.

ing part of the Article, which makes mention only of particular Churches, such as the "Churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch," or "the Church of Rome."*

A visible Church then is, according to its definition, "a congregation of Saints;" and what we are to understand by the latter expression is explained in the next Article, the object of which is to obviate an objection which might be urged against the statements of the preceding one. "Although," the Augsburg Confession proceeds, "the" (a) "Church is *properly* a society of Saints, that is true believers (vere credendium), yet since in this life many hypocrites and evil men are mixed up with them, it must be remembered that the Sacraments and the Word lose not their efficacy by being administered and preached by the wicked."† The "Saints" then, of which a Church, according to the idea which Protestantism frames of it, is composed, are real ones; they are "faithful men" (fideles), and the word, "faith," has in Protestantism a very different signification from that which it bears in Romanism;‡ they are not only outwardly consecrated to God, but inwardly sanctified by His Spirit.

The Articles of Schmalcald, composed by Luther in anticipation of a conference to be held at that place between the Romish and the Protestant theologians, which, however, did not take place, return "thanks to God, that, in these times, even a boy of seven years of age can tell what the Church consists of; viz. believers, holy persons, Christ's sheep, who hear the voice of their shepherd. For so do children declare their faith:—'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church.' This holiness consists, not in outward things, but in (the possession of) the Word of God, and true faith."§

The smaller Catechism of Luther teaches the catechumen to profess, "that he can by no means come to the knowledge of Christ by the unaided strength of his own reason; that it was the Holy Spirit who called him through the Gospel, enlightened him with

* The same remark has been made by Archbishop Whately, Kingdom of Christ, p. 150.

† Conf. Aug. art. 3.

‡ Unless the reader is careful to remember this, he will constantly be in danger of attributing to the statements of the Romish formularies a meaning which they do not really bear. In those formularies a "fidelis" means one who professes the Christian faith, whatever be his inward state, even though he be living in mortal sin, or be a concealed atheist: in the language of Protestantism, the same word signifies one who exercises lively trust in Christ, which cannot exist without a change of heart.

§ "Hæc sanctitas non consistit in amiculo linteo, insigni verticali, veste talari, et aliis ipsorum ceremoniis, contra sacram scripturam excogitatis, sed in verbo Dei et verâ fide."—Art. Smal. art. 12.

His gifts, and now sanctifies, and preserves him in the faith, in like manner as He calls, and sanctifies, the whole Church upon earth:"* and the larger Catechism, expounding the third great division of the Apostles' Creed, declares that:—"The Holy Spirit carries on His work of sanctification through the instrumentality of 'the Communion of Saints,' or the Christian Church. That is;—first of all, the Holy Spirit transplants us into that Holy Society, the Church, through which, as an instrument, He teaches us, and leads us to Christ. For neither could I, or thou, have known any thing of Christ, or believed upon Him, unless, through the preaching of the Gospel, the help of the Holy Spirit had been freely offered us. Where the doctrine of Christ is not taught, there the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to constitute the Church, and gather men into it, does not work.† The Christian Church is termed a 'Communion of Saints,' for in fact they are equivalent expressions; the word 'ecclesia' signifying a congregation of 'the called.' *The clause 'Communion of Saints,' was added, in order to explain what the Christian Church is*" (that is, in its essence, or according to its idea); "*viz. a society, or fellowship, to which none but holy persons belong.*"‡ "The sum of what we here profess to believe is therefore this:—'I believe, that there is upon earth a certain community of Saints, composed solely of holy persons, under one Head, collected together by the Spirit; of one faith, and one mind, endowed with manifold gifts, but united in love, and without sects or divisions. Of these I believe that I am one, having fellowship with them in the spiritual blessings which they enjoy; united to them in one body by means of the Word of God, which I have heard, and do now hear; which hearing of the Word is the first step towards entering this community."§

* Cat. Min. cap. 2. art. 3.

† Cat. Maj. part II. art. iii. ss. 30. 34. 39. 40. 42.

‡ "Neque aliam ob rem quàm interpretandi gratiâ priori adjecta est, quâ quispiam haud dubie exponere voluit quid Christianorum esset ecclesia." It is worthy of notice, that both the Romish and the Protestant formularies regard the clause, "The Communion of Saints," as being simply an explanation, subsequently added, of the preceding Article, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church;" and not as a distinct Article of faith. And this doubtless is the true light in which it is to be regarded. For what otherwise are we to understand by the clause? "The fellowship," says Pearson, "which the saints maintain with God, with each other, and with happy spirits." But this is already expressed, implicitly, in the Article on the Church; for Church membership is, in fact, such fellowship. The clause, no doubt, was added, to explain, as Luther observes, what the Church is; and should be read with the preceding, as one Article.

§ "Credo in terris esse quandam sanctorum congregatiunculam et communionem *ex mere sanctis hominibus* coactam, sub uno capite Christo, per Spiritum Sanctum convocatam."

If the Lutheran Confessions labour under a want of clearness and precision of statement, the defect is, in some measure, supplied by those of the Reformed Churches: which, while presenting, in all points, a substantial coincidence of sentiment,* are fuller, and more discriminating, in their statements than the former: besides their own intrinsic value therefore, they serve to clear up what is obscure or ambiguous in the expressions of Luther and Melancthon. The following are the declarations of some of the principal of these Confessions. The Helvetic Confession of 1566, which may be regarded as the symbol of the Swiss Churches, observes† that, "Since God from the beginning would have men to be saved by coming to the knowledge of the truth, there must always have been, there is now, and ever shall be, a Church; that is, a community of believers, or saints, gathered out of the world; whose distinction it is to know, and to worship, through the Word and by the Spirit, the true God in Christ our Saviour, and by faith to participate in all the blessings freely offered to us through Christ. These are all citizens of one polity, subjects of the same Lord, under the same laws, and recipients of the same spiritual blessings. *It is concerning these that the Article of the Creed, 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,' is to be understood.*

"Since there is, in relation to this community, but one God, one Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus, one Shepherd of the whole flock, one Head of the body, one Spirit, one faith, &c., there can be but one Church: which, moreover, we call 'Catholic,' because it is diffused throughout the world. The Church indeed may be viewed under the twofold aspect of triumphant and militant; but these terms merely denote different conditions of the members of the same Church.

"*The Church militant upon earth has always existed under the form of many particular Churches, which, however, are all connected with each other by their common relation to the one Catholic Church.*‡ The latter is termed in Scripture the house of the living God, built of living and spiritual stones, upon the rock (Christ). Hence it is

* "On the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth, Articles," (of the Augsburg Confession) "there is no difference of opinion between the two parties." — Colloquium Lipsiacum, s. 12. This was a conference held at Leipsic, A. D. 1681, between the theologians of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, with the view of ascertaining how far they were agreed. — Augusti, Corp. Lib. Symb. &c. p. 386.

† De Cathol. Eccles. cap. 17.

‡ "Et militans in terris ecclesia semper plurimas habuit particulares ecclesias, quæ tamen omnes ad unitatem Catholicæ ecclesiæ referuntur." — De Cathol. Eccles. cap. 17.

called 'the pillar and ground of the truth;' the bride of Christ; and the body of which He is the Head.

"The head is that part of the body which governs the whole, and from which life, and power to increase, are derived into the members. There can *be but one head of the body; and there must be a congruity between the two. Hence the Church can have no other head than Christ; a spiritual body admits of none but a spiritual Head.* We disapprove therefore of the doctrine of Rome, that the Pope is visible Head of the universal Church, and the Vicar of Christ upon earth. *For we affirm that Christ Himself discharges in His Church all the offices of a Priest, and Pastor; and therefore needs no Vicar: a Vicar exists where the principal is absent; but Christ is present,* the source of all spiritual life and grace.*

"As we acknowledge no other head of the Church than Christ, so we do not at once admit the claim of every (particular) Church to be a true Church; but we say, that that is a true Church in which are found the notes of a true Church, especially the pure preaching of the Word. We condemn those churches as corrupt which are not, in this respect, what they ought to be, however much they may boast of their succession of bishops, of their unity, and of their antiquity.

"Communion with the true Church of Christ we account of so much importance, that we deem it impossible for any one to enjoy the favour of God who separates himself from it. It may, however, happen that some, without any fault of their own, shall be unable to participate in the Sacraments; such persons we do not exclude from the communion of the Church.

"The (true) Church may be, and has been, so reduced in numbers as to appear almost extinct; as in the times of Elijah and others; *whence it may be termed an invisible Church: not that the persons who compose it are invisible, but because, being known unto God alone, it often escapes the observation of men.*

"Not all who are nominally in the Church, are true and lively members thereof; for there are in it many hypocrites, who outwardly hear the Word, and partake of the Sacraments, while, inwardly, they are destitute of the Spirit. As long, however, as they put on the appearance of piety, *though they are not of the Church,*

* "Unicum item est corporis caput, et cum corpore habet congruentiam. Ergo ecclesia non potest ullum aliud habere caput quam Christum. Nam ut ecclesia est corpus spirituale, ita caput habeat sibi congruens spirituale utique oportet. Docemus Christum . . . . . nullo indigere vicario, qui absentis est. Christus vero præsens est ecclesiæ, et caput vivificum." —Conf. Hel. 1 ma. c. 17.

they are counted to belong to it,* just as traitors, before they are detected, enjoy the name of citizens: hence our Lord compares the Church to a net containing both good and bad fishes, and to a field in which tares and wheat grow side by side.

"The unity of the Church consists, not in the sameness of external rites and ceremonies, but rather in the truth and unity of the Catholic faith. The Catholic faith is delivered to us not in human writings, but in Holy Scripture; and is summed up in the Apostles' Creed. The pure doctrine of the Gospel, and the ordinances *expressly appointed by Christ himself;* these are the constituent elements of the true 'Unity of the Church.'"

The Scotch Confession, as might be expected, assigns, in its statements on the Church, a prominent place to the doctrine of election. It defines the Church to be "a society of the elect, of all ages and countries, both Jews and Gentiles; this is the Catholic, or universal Church. Those who are members of it worship God in Christ, and enjoy fellowship with Him through the Spirit. *This Church is invisible, known only to God, who alone knows who are His;* and comprehends both the departed in the Lord, and the elect upon earth."†

The Belgic Confession has nothing upon the subject particularly deserving of notice. "The Catholic Church is the community of all true believers, viz. those who hope in Christ alone for salvation, and are sanctified by His Spirit. It is not attached to any one place, or limited to particular persons, the members of it being dispersed throughout the world." The notes of a true Church it declares to be "the pure preaching of the Word, the right administration of the Sacraments, and the exercise of discipline."‡

More to the point are the statements of the Tetrapolitan Confession, supposed to be the composition of Bucer. After defining the Church to be "the community of those who believe upon Christ," among whom, however, "false professors will ever be found," it proceeds thus:—"Whereas the Church is called the bride of Christ, Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church of the first-born, &c.; it must be remembered that these sublime appellations belong only to those who really believe in Christ, and are the true Sons of God. Over these since the Saviour reigns in spirit and in truth, they are properly His

* "Et tamen, dum hi simulant pietatem, licet ex ecclesia non sint, numerantur tamen in ecclesia."

† Conf. Scot. Art. 16. ‡ Conf. Belg. ss. 27. 29.

Church, the communion, or society, of saints, which, in the Apostles' Creed, the Church is declared to be. From this His Church, Christ is never absent; but by His spirit sanctifies it, that He may present it to Himself without spot or wrinkle. *Although that which makes this community to be the Church,* (that is, which constitutes its essence) *viz. faith in Christ, is not visible,* yet the community itself is not (absolutely) invisible, but can be known by its fruits;* of these fruits the principal are an undaunted confession of the truth, sincere and universal love, and a willingness to leave all things for Christ's sake; which, wherever the Gospel is preached, and the Sacraments administered, will, to a greater or less extent, be manifested."†

Of all the Protestant confessions, however, that of the Polish Churches is, as on other points, so on the subject of the Church, the most accurate and comprehensive. To any one wishing to gain, without the expenditure of much time or labour, a clear view of the differences between Romanists and Protestants, this Confession, which appears in the collections under the title of "Declaratio Thoruniensis," may be recommended as sufficient of itself for this purpose. "There are," it declares, "particular Churches, and the Church universal. The true universal Church is the community of all believers, dispersed throughout the world, who are, and remain, one Catholic Church, so long as they are united by subjection to one Head, Christ, by the indwelling of one spirit, and the profession of the same faith; *and this, though they be not associated in one common external polity, but, as regards external fellowship, and ecclesiastical regimen, be not in communion with each other.*‡ Particular Churches are societies of Christians, who, besides being united by the internal bond of the spirit, are under the same external polity. With respect to these, it is to be observed, that, although they alone are true and living members of the Church who are united to Christ and to Christ's body, not only externally but internally, yet, since the spiritual fellowship of Christians is a thing invisible, all who remain in visible communion with the Church are, in the judgment of charity, to be

* "Hæc, quanquam id, unde habet quod vere ecclesia Christi sit, nempe fides in Christum, videri nequeat, ipsa videri tamen, planeque ex fructibus cognosci potest." — Conf. Tetrap. c. 15.

† Conf. Tetrap. c. 15.

‡ "Quamvis nullo communi externo in terris regimire socientur, aut etiam sociari possint, sed in regionibus et regnis, aut rebuspublicis disjunctissimis, vel etiam hostilibus dispersi, et quoad externam societatem, aut ecclesiasticum regimen, plane disjuncti sint." — Declar, Thorun. s. 7.

esteemed members thereof, although many of them may, in the sight of God, be hypocrites. A true particular Church is distinguished from a false one by the profession of the true faith, the unmutilated administrations of the Sacraments, and the exercise of discipline; *all other notes are accidental and subordinate.* Among visible Churches, however, there may be different degrees of purity; and a Church is not at once to be deemed unworthy of that title, because it is affected with some errors. Provided always that these errors do not affect the foundations of saving faith, and that the society maintains a brotherly communion with other Churches: should, however, any community teach doctrines subversive of the faith, and pertinaciously separate itself from other Churches holding the foundation, it can no longer lay claim to the title of a true Church.

"While we hold that it is impossible for the universal Church to fall away from the faith, or from the worship of Christ, we deny that to any particular Church the privilege has been granted by Christ never to err in matters of faith, or in the ordering of points connected with divine worship.

"As regards ecclesiastical polity, we hold that it is strictly monarchical as far as the relation between Christ and the universal Church is concerned: of particular Churches we believe the regimen, as established by Christ, to be aristocratical; yet so as that we refuse not to the bishops, or superintendents, a certain superiority as compared with the rest of the presbyters. But we deny that there exists any *jure divino* visible Head of the whole Church, to whom all, both Churches and individuals, must render obedience, on pain of being excluded from the covenant of grace."*

Our own formularies, aiming as they do at brevity of statement, leave the Nineteenth Article, already alluded to, unexplained. Under these circumstances, it may be proper to adduce, as a fit conclusion to the foregoing extracts, the following passage from Nowell's Catechism, which, like Jewell's Apology, may be considered as of semi-symbolical authority.

"*M.* Let me hear what thou hast to say concerning the holy Catholic Church.

"*A.* Before the foundation of the world, God decreed to establish for himself a holy Society, which the Apostles called 'ecclesia,' or a congregation. Into this society, God has collected a vast multitude of persons, who all obey Christ as their king, and con-

* Declar. Thorun. s. 7.

fide themselves to his care and protection. To it they properly belong who truly fear God, walk in holiness, and have a sure hope of eternal life. As many as remain steadfast in this faith were predestinated thereto before the foundation of the world; whereof the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts is a sure pledge.

"*M.* Give me then a definition of the Church.

"*A. The Church is the universal society of all the faithful whom God predestinated from eternity to everlasting life, through Christ.*

"*M.* Why dost thou call the Church holy?

"*A.* In order to distinguish it from the congregation of the wicked. For those whom God hath chosen he renews to holiness of life.

"*M.* Is faith the only way of apprehending the Church? (In other words, Is it absolutely invisible?)

"*A.* Here, indeed, in the Creed, the Article relates properly to that community which God, by his secret election, has brought into a state of adoption towards himself: *which Church can neither be seen with the eyes, nor always discerned by visible signs.** There is, however, also a visible Church of God, the notes of which he has ever declared to us. A visible Church is nothing but a certain society of persons, wherever they may be, who profess the pure doctrine of Christ, and celebrate the Sacraments as the Word of God directs. These are the indispensable notes of a Church: but, if the Church be in a healthy condition, it will also exhibit the exercise of discipline.

"*M.* Are not, then, all the members of this visible Church elected to life eternal?

"*A.* Many belong to it who are anything but true members of the Church. *Nevertheless, because, wherever the Word of God is purely preached, and the Sacraments rightly administered, there will in that place be found some destined to salvation through Christ, on this account we call the whole of the society a Church of God;* for Christ has promised that where even two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them."†

It will be observed that this Catechism, like the Scotch Confession, strongly insists upon the divine election as the ultimate

* This question and answer are taken nearly word for word from the Genevan Catechism, composed by Calvin. "*M.* Potestne autem hæc ecclesia aliter cognosci quam cum fide creditur? *P.* Est quidem et *visibilis* Dei ecclesia, quam nobis certis indiciis notisque descripsit: sed hic proprie de eorum congregatione agitur, quos arcana sua electione adoptavit in salutem. Ea autem nec cernitur perpetuo oculis, nec signis dignoscitur." — Cat. Gen. in Eccl.

† Quarta Pars. Symb. de Eccles.

ground of the Church, while most of the other formularies content themselves with declaring what it is (in its idea), when actually in existence, without entering into the question of the divine decrees. This latter course seems, on every account, to be the most advisable. The essential point of difference between the Protestant and the Romish view of the Church has no necessary connexion with what are commonly called Calvinistic views; and, as these doctrines have been a fruitful source of controversy among Protestants themselves, it seems better to avoid the topic altogether.

Whatever be the merits or defects of Protestantism, it is evident, from the foregoing extracts, that it is not, as Bossuet would have us believe,* a system of chaotic inconsistencies: the unanimity of sentiment, and even similarity of expression, proving that, however they may have occasionally clothed their ideas in ill-chosen language, the Reformers had a consistent view of their own, and were well aware at what points it diverged from that of their opponents. If the reader compares together the statements of the several formularies, he will perhaps deem the following a sufficiently accurate representation of the distinctive teaching of Protestantism on the subject of the idea of the Church.

The one true Church, the holy Catholic Church of the Creed, is not a body of mixed composition, comprehending within its pale both the evil and the good: it is the community of those who, wherever they may be, are in living union with Christ by faith, and partake of the sanctifying influences of His Spirit. Properly, it comprises, besides its members now upon earth, all who shall ultimately be saved. In its more confined acceptation, the phrase denotes the body of true believers existing at any given time in the world.

The true Church is so far invisible as that it is not yet manifested in its corporate capacity; or, in other words, there is no one society, or visible corporation upon earth, of which it can be said that it is the mystical body of Christ. Hence, of course, the Head of this body is not visible.

Particular churches, otherwise unconnected societies, are one by reason of their common relation to, and connexion with, the one true Church or mystical body of Christ. The outward notes of this connexion, and therefore of a true visible Church, are, the pure preaching of the Word (in fundamentals at least), and the administration of the Sacraments "according to Christ's ordinance in all

* Histoire des Variations, &c. liv. xv.

those things that of necessity are requisite to the same" These are the two indispensable notes of a true Church: to them may be added, though it stands not in the same order of necessity, the exercise of discipline.

Although visible churches are, according to the idea, "congregations of saints," *i. e.* of really sanctified persons, and must be regarded as such if they are to have the name of Churches, yet they are never really so: in point of fact, they are always mixed communities, comprising hypocrites and nominal Christians, as well as true believers, a perfect separation between whom is, in the present life, impossible, and is reserved to the second coming of Christ to judgment. Hence the aggregate of visible Christian Churches throughout the world is not exactly identical with the true Church, which, as has been said, consists only of the living members of Christ.

Such notes as, "the succession of Bishops," "antiquity," "amplitude," "the *name* of Catholic," &c., are, *taken alone*, not sufficient to prove a society to be a true Church of Christ.

To the one true Church, the body of Christ, properly belong the promises of perpetuity, of the continued presence of Christ, and of preservation from fundamental error. The same may be said of the attributes of the Church, Unity, Sanctity, &c.; these, in their full and proper sense, can be predicated only of that body of Christ which is not yet fully manifested.

The explanations which are necessary to clear up the meaning of several of these positions are reserved for a more fitting place. In what sense Protestants speak of an invisible Church, or call the true Church invisible; what the connexion is between the Church in its truth and the Church as visible; in what light we are to regard local Christian societies;—upon these points some remarks, intended to obviate misconceptions of the Protestant view, will hereafter be offered. The question now more immediately before us is, What is the essential point of distinction between the Romish and the Protestant idea of the Church, as it is to be gathered from a comparison of the statements above given? In the following chapter an attempt will be made to determine this important point.

CHAPTER II.

POINTS OF AGREEMENT, AND FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ROMANISTS AND PROTESTANTS, AS REGARDS THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH.

In instituting a comparison between different theological systems, it is obviously the proper course, first to examine whether they hold any truths in common, and then, having ascertained how far they agree, to mark the point of divergence, and trace out the subsequent differences hence arising. In no other way is an accurate knowledge of the several schools of doctrinal divinity which have arisen in the Church, and especially of the differences between Protestantism and Romanism, opposed as they are to each other, not absolutely but relatively, to be attained. Obviously proper, however, as this rule is, there is none which has been by controversialists more frequently transgressed. Both Romanists and Protestants have been too much in the custom of insisting strongly upon some one great truth, as if it were peculiar to their own system, without deeming it necessary to inquire whether, and how far, it is admitted by the opposite party: the consequence of which is that, not only have the most incorrect representations been given of the doctrines held on each side respectively, but the real points on which the controversy turns have escaped notice, or at least have not been brought out into a clear light.

For example, it is difficult to conceive how any writer, who had carefully compared the public declarations of the Romish and the Protestant Churches, on the subject under discussion, could have thought of stating the differences thus: — "The chief question to be answered is this: — How do we arrive at a true knowledge of the doctrine of Christ; or rather of the plan of redemption proposed for our acceptance in Christ Jesus? The Protestant replies, By searching the Scriptures, which cannot deceive: the Catholic (Romanist) says, By means of the church, in which, and in which alone, we attain to the true understanding of Scripture:" or of representing the teaching of Protestantism as follows: — "Luther considered each believer as absolutely independent of any

religious community; such being, in his view, quite unnecessary, inasmuch as God alone" (i. e. without any external instrument) "teaches the Christian." "What, according to the Protestant view, can the Church be, but a purely invisible community?" (a community, it is meant, solely of the Spirit, without visible notes of any kind). "As regards the origin of the Church, Luther's view was as follows:—Faith in Christ strikes root in some particular individual" (independently of any external means); "if this faith advances to maturity, and is openly professed, the individual becomes a recognised disciple of the Saviour. Should he find others of the same mind with himself, they unite together, and form a society, publishing a confession of what they believe: and thus it is that the Church, as a visible body, comes into existence;"* (in other words, Protestants hold the Church to be a mere voluntary association, which acknowledges no higher authority than the private judgment of those who choose to belong to it.) When an author like Moehler, not of the inferior class of Romish controversialists best known in this country, but occupying a high place among the theologians of his Church, can thus represent, or rather misrepresent, the views of his opponents, it is the less to be wondered at that some amongst ourselves, owing, no doubt, to an imperfect acquaintance with the subject, should entertain misconceptions equally gross, and even absurd. It can be attributed to nothing but an oversight, that a recent advocate of (so-called) Church principles should thus describe what he conceives to be the Protestant, or Evangelical, theory:—"There the Church is not considered as intervening in any way between the Saviour and the individual, but rather it is regarded as an institution of convention, resting upon grounds of religious expediency; and her laws as dependent upon the will of individuals, whether few or many. The scheme of salvation is addressed by God not through one channel to a vast visible body, but to a selected number of particular persons. This salvation is conveyed direct by an operation exclusively internal, &c. &c."†

In order to obviate mistakes of this kind, it will be advisable, in the first instance, to point out to what extent both parties are agreed; and thus to clear the way to an accurate apprehension of the true point in dispute between them.

* Moehler's Symbolik, pp. 359. 414. 418. and 421. The edition of this work referred t is the German one of 1838.

† Church Principles considered in their Results, by W. E. Gladstone, Esq. London, 1840 p. 126.

The most cursory glance at the extracts above given will convince the reader that on both sides it is admitted that the Christian life is essentially a social one; in other words, that Christ came into the world not only to reveal certain truths, or to establish an unseen fellowship between Himself and His followers, but to found a Church upon earth. A state of isolation and independency is no more the natural tendency of Protestantism than of Romanism. "We hold," says the Belgic Confession, "that since out of the Church there is no salvation, no one, of whatever order or dignity he may be, is at liberty to separate himself from the congregation of saints, and live in solitary independence; but that all are bound to unite themselves to it, to preserve its unity, and to minister to the edification of their brethren, the members of the same body."* The obligation of social union among Christians is so unequivocally declared in Scripture, that no persons calling themselves Christians, and acknowledging the authority of the sacred writings, have been found to deny it.

Considered in one point of view, indeed, religion is a transaction between God and the individual spirit of man: the true life of the Christian is hid with Christ in God, and the exercises of it, repentance, faith, and love, are matters strictly personal, and cannot be predicated, except in a loose and improper sense, of a community. And, no doubt, it is conceivable that nothing more than such a solitary communion of the individual worshipper with God might have been designed by the Divine Founder of Christianity: that his followers might have been intended to form no visible associations, but to hold, each in the solitude of his own heart, intercourse with Deity. There is nothing positively absurd in such a supposition; at the same time, there is a strong antecedent improbability against it. For man is essentially a social being, and human life, as distinguished from that of the brutes, is a life of communion and fellowship; the faculties of reason and speech, which are denied to the lower animals, unequivocally manifesting the divine intention that men should congregate into polities.† Moreover, it is only in a social state that men's faculties, whether moral or intellectual, attain any high degree of expansion or improvement. "He that suffices for himself," the ancient philosopher tells us, "must either be a brute or a God." It is only in social

* Conf. Belg. s. 28.

† Ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῶον.—Λόγον μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζώων· ὁδὲ λόγος ἐπὶ τῷ ἐηλοῦν ἐστι τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ βλαβερόν, ὥστε τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον. Ἡ δὲ τούτων κοινωνία ποιεῖ οἰκίαν καὶ πόλιν. Arist. Pol. l. i. c. 2.

combinations that a sphere is opened for the exercise of the moral faculties; that a division of labour takes place, natural superiority of mind or body assumes its due place, arts are cultivated, and everything comprised in the term civilisation, makes progress. And the more civilised a community becomes, the higher it rises in the scale of intelligence, the more closely will its members be connected together, not merely by laws and institutions, but by the invisible bond of mutual dependence, and co-operation. Judging, then, by what we know of the actual constitution of man, and of the conditions necessary to his intellectual and moral culture, we should deem it in the highest degree unlikely that those who, from age to age, were to be partakers of the spiritual life of which Christ is the source, should be thereby brought into a new relation towards God merely, and not, also, towards each other: that there should be true religion in the world, but no Church.

It is almost superfluous to remark that the anticipations which we should be thus led to form have been fully realised. The Divine Spirit, of which the Christian is partaker through Christ, not only gives him access directly to the Father, but also connects him with every other Christian: so that, as there is one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, there is also one baptism, and one body, and no one can be in communion with Christ, in the full sense of the words, without also being in communion with Christ's Church. In accordance with the language of ancient prophecy when describing the Messiah's kingdom, — language which always suggests the idea of organised unity, as distinguished from a mere collection of atoms, — our Lord, from the very first, contemplated His followers as forming social combinations. The kingdom of heaven upon earth was to be like a field of corn, a net full of fishes, and a household: or, to cite another image, Christians were to bear the same relation to Christ which the branches do to the vine, the same hidden life which nourishes each in particular, forming a bond of union between all. Indeed, in two passages, our Lord, by a kind of *prolepsis*, applies to the company of his disciples the very term which afterwards became the one commonly used to distinguish them from the Jewish synagouge; the term, ἐκκλησία, or Church.* And when His earthly mission was about to close, in the solemn prayer which he offered up for His disciples, His

* St. Matt. xvi. 18, — "Upon this rock I will build my church;" and xviii. 17, — "Tell it unto the church." Our word "church," like the German kirche, is derived from κυριακόν, *i. e.* the Lord's house.

repeated petition was, that "they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee; that they may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."*

When the Church was formally constituted on the day of Pentecost, its members appear at once in outward and visible union with each other. Even the promised Comforter descended upon the Apostles and disciples, not as they were scattered here and there, but when "they were all with one accord in one place." And thenceforth it was the rule of the Divine administration to add "to the Church," that is, to the existing society of Christians, "such as should be saved."

Equally evident is it, that to affirm that Romanists teach that the Church is visible, Protestants that it is invisible, is to misrepresent the real state of the case. Both parties hold that the Church is visible; though it is quite true that when they come to explain their meaning, they differ very materially. A purely invisible Church is a fiction discarded on both sides. The following declaration of the French Confession expresses the common sentiment of all Protestants: — "We openly affirm that where the Word of God is not received, where there is no profession of faith, and administration of the Sacraments, there, properly speaking, we cannot affirm that there is any Church."† To assign any "notes," that is visible signs, such as the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments, to a community absolutely invisible, would be a manifest absurdity; but these, according to all the Protestant confessions, are the notes of the — or rather a — Church. The Reformers were careful to explain distinctly that, while rejecting the Romish definition of the Church, they by no means, as their adversaries falsely insinuated, reduced the latter to a mere philosophical idea, a Utopia, having no actual existence, or without visible tokens of its presence. "We do not," says Melancthon, in reply to the Papal theologians, "as some cavillers affirm, dream of a Platonic republic: we say that the Church is an existing reality; and we assign the notes of it, the Word and the Sacraments."‡

Christians, it has been already observed, were to form a society, or societies: but no human association can exist, much less endure, without some visible tokens to mark the incorporation, and

* John xvii. 21.

† Conf. Gall. Art. 28.

‡ "Neque vero somniamus nos Platonicam civitatem, ut quidam impie cavillantur; sed dicimus existere hanc ecclesiam: et addimus notas, puram doctrinam evangelii, et sacramenta." — Apol. Conf. Aug. c. 4.

the continuance therein, of those of whom it is to be composed without these, there may be a casual assemblage of persons, but not a society. The Church, as Bellarmin well remarks, though a spiritual community, is not a community of mere spirits, but of men; and in its constitution, the complex nature of man had to be kept in view.* There can be no society, where there is no mutual recognition of the members; and recognise each other they cannot, unless they are distinguished from others by some outward symbol. Besides, a mere inward communion of the spirit would have left unsatisfied the natural craving, which belongs to human nature, for something visible and tangible, as the exponent of the life within. In gracious condescension to these requirements, inseparable from our mixed constitution, our Lord Himself appointed the visible sign by which the societies of his followers should be known; not only sanctioning the practice of social worship by attaching His special presence and blessing to the assembling of two or three together in His name, but ordaining the two Sacraments, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper; the one to mark visibly the entrance of an individual into a Christian society, the other his continuance therein; and both to be pledges of the union of Christians with Him, and with each other. Accordingly, the very first mention of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles presents it to us as manifesting its unseen fellowship by means of the visible ordinances aforesaid. "They that gladly received his word were baptized:" "they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine, in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer:" "they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and, breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."† No one was recognised as a Christian who did not give this public evidence of his Christianity.

Equally remote from the truth are the assertions of Moehler, and others, that, according to Protestant views, the Church "in

* "Ecclesia est societas quædam, non Angelorum, neque animarum, sed hominum. Non autem dici potest societas hominum, nisi in externis et visibilibus signis consistat; nam non est societas, nisi se agnoscant ii qui dicantur socii; non autem se possunt homines agnoscere, nisi societatis vincula sint externa et visibilia." — De Eccl. Mil. lib. iii. c. 12.

† Acts ii. 41, 42. 46. Whatever the word κοινωνία, which occurs in the last of these verses, may mean, our version is obviously incorrect in taking it with Ἀποστόλων. Had St. Luke's meaning been, "the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship," he would have written, προσκαρτεροῦντες τῇ διδαχῇ καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ τῶν Ἀποστόλων, not τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν Ἀποστόλων, καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, καὶ τῇ κλάσει, &c.; where the word Ἀποστόλων is clearly connected with διδαχῇ only. The point would not be worth noticing, had not erroneous theories been built upon the mistranslation. See Manning's Unity of the Church, p. 84. (2nd edition.)

no way intervenes between the Saviour and the individual;" that God alone teaches the Christian, and that, "by an operation exclusively internal;" or that it is "by reading the Scriptures," that, ordinarily, persons are first brought to the knowledge of Christ. The functions of the Church, in the application of Christ's saving work to individuals, would, no doubt, be differently described by a Romanist and a Protestant; but that the instrumentality of the Church, in some sense of the words, is, as an ordinary rule, indispensable to the salvation of the individual, is as strongly asserted by the latter as it is by the former. Let the reader recall to mind the express statements of the larger Catechism of Luther. "The Holy Spirit carries on his sanctifying work by means of the communion of Saints, or the Christian Church." "The Holy Spirit transplants us into His society, the Church, through which, as an instrument, He teaches us, and leads us to Christ." "Where the doctrine of Christ is not taught, there the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to constitute the Church, does not work."* "God," say the Swiss Protestants, "could, indeed, by an immediate exercise of His power add persons to the Church; but He prefers to act upon men through the ministry of men. We must be on our guard against the error of so attributing the work of our conversion and edification to the secret influence of the Spirit, as to make void the office of the ministry."†

The fact is, the Church may, and indeed must always be, viewed under a twofold aspect; it is both the manifestation, and the instrument of Christ's saving power; it is both the visible evidence of the Saviour's unseen existence and operation, and the means whereby, from age to age, He gathers in His elect. The supposition that the divine plan would be to save individuals by an immediate, and exclusively internal, operation of the Spirit, is negatived by the whole analogy of nature. The rule observed by the Creator in His providential government of the world is, not to interfere directly in human affairs, but to effect His purposes mediately, and by means of instruments. It is thus that having at first, by an exercise of His Almighty will, launched the heavenly bodies into space, and assigned to each a determinate path of revolution, He has, instead of perpetually renewing that original impulse, subjected them to the uniform operation of a law, by which, as a secondary cause, their motions are now governed, and

* See above, p. 49, 50.

† Conf. Hel., c. 18. De Minist. Eccl.

they retained in their appointed orbits. So also, having created men, in the first instance, by an immediate act of Omnipotence, out of the dust of the earth, He has replenished the world with human beings, not by a repetition of that primary miracle, but by causing all men to spring, by propagation, from the original pair. In the same way, the well-being, both spiritual and temporal, of each individual is very much dependent upon the voluntary acts of others; and though nothing is more certain than that God wills the happiness of all his creatures, He often suffers (as it appears to us) His gracious purposes to be frustrated, rather than infringe the rule which He has prescribed to Himself, of making man the instrument of good to man. It would be a deviation, then, from the rule which He observes in other things, were God, either to dispense with human instruments in bringing men to the knowledge of Christ, or to make no provision for perpetuating that saving knowledge by a law of succession, analogous to that which we see in operation in the material world. In a word, we should consider it quite in accordance with the analogy of nature, that while, in the well known words of Bishop Butler, "miraculous powers" should be "given to the first preachers of Christianity, in order to their introducing it into the world, a visible Church" (or visible Churches) "should be established in order to continue it and carry it on throughout all ages:—to be the repository of the oracles of God; to hold up the light of revelation in aid to that of nature, and propagate it throughout all generations to the end of the world."*

And so, in point of fact, was it ordered. The Church, being in the first instance formally constituted by the miraculous descent of the Spirit, was thenceforward both to perpetuate itself, and to evangelize the world, by the agency of human instruments. It is in the use of the Word and the Sacraments, preached and administered by men, that the existing members of the Church are built up in the faith: it is by pastoral instruction that the children and catechumens of the society are prepared both for full communion with the Church and for the office of transmitting, in their turn, the faith which they received from their fathers to generations yet unborn. So it is also in the work of missions. The Church, in fulfilling her Lord's command to evangelize all nations, must employ human agency. "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear

* Analogy, part ii. c. 1.

without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" And upon the Church is imposed the duty of sending. If the duty be neglected, no miraculous interference can be expected to atone for the neglect; and the heathen perish. It is evident, then, and admitted, that it is of the essence of the Church, not only to be visible, that is, to manifest its existence by outward signs, but to be the human instrument both of edifying its own members, and of converting the heathen; and we can form no idea of it which does not represent it as preaching, teaching, and administering the Sacraments. Under this aspect it comes into view in the earliest notices which we have of it. No sooner had the Spirit been given, than the Apostles, in obedience to their Lord's command, began to be "witnesses of Him" "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." The infant community of Christians at once exhibited the aspect of an actively aggressive body, assailing every form of superstition and error, and inviting all men to partake of the blessings of Salvation: while within the society itself, by means of the "Apostles' doctrine," participation in the Holy Communion, and the exercise of discipline, Christians were built up in Christ.

Once more, it must in fairness to the Romanist be conceded that he does not, as has been sometimes affirmed, absolutely deny that there is a twofold point of view, an outward and an inward, from which the Church may be made a matter of consideration. The Romish Catechism, while strenuously maintaining that the Church, in its idea, consists both of the good and the evil, yet does, as we have seen, make a difference between the living and the dead members of it; and by no means denies that, under the external form of Christian profession, there exists an inner, and unseen, circle of those who are in vital communion with the Saviour. "The good are those who are united to each other, not only by a common profession of faith and reception of the Sacraments, but by the Spirit of Grace and the bond of charity; of whom it is said, 'The Lord knoweth them that are His.'"* And Bellarmin expressly adopts the following statement of Augustin: — The Church is a living system, composed both of a body and a soul; — the soul being the internal gifts of the Spirit, faith, love, &c.; the body, an external profession of the faith, and use of the Sacraments. Hence it follows, that some belong both to the body

* Cat. Rom. c. 10. s. 10.

and soul of the Church, viz., the truly pious; these may be compared to the living members of the body, although they partake of life in different degrees. Others belong only to the soul, as catechumens, or excommunicated persons, if (as may occur) they have faith and love. Others, lastly, are of the body only, such, namely, as, while they have no inward grace, are in outward communion with the Church.*

Thus far all Christians, or, if not all, certainly the Romish and the Protestant Churches, are agreed. It would have been needless to enlarge upon such obvious truths, were it not that, as has been remarked, this common ground upon which both parties meet has been by Romish controversialists, and by those amongst ourselves who incline to the Romish view, appropriated as exclusively their own. That the Church is, in one sense, visible; that, as a general rule, those who would be saved must be members of a Christian society, and participate in the visible ordinances appointed by Christ; that the Church is the instrument by which Christ both perfects His own people, and extends His kingdom in the world; these truths are often triumphantly brought forward as destructive of, or at least incompatible with, the doctrines of Protestantism. As if every Protestant confession did not distinctly enunciate them. When, therefore, the Romanist, and they who adopt his theory, insist upon the fact that the Church of Scripture has the property of being visible; when they urge the necessity of the Sacraments to salvation, where they can be had, and of some authority external, and superior, to individual feeling or reason; when, lastly, they direct an attention to the importance of Unity, and the suppression of the individual, selfish, will, the reply to be made is that, if by eloquent declamations of this kind,† they intend it to be understood that Protestants reject, or can find no place in their system for, these truths and these Christian graces, they are either unacquainted with, or misrepresent, the views of their opponents; and that what they would fain appropriate to themselves is nothing but the common belief of all bodies of orthodox Christians. It is quite true that when we come to inquire in what the visibility of the Church properly consists, and in what relation it stands to the Spirit within, we find serious differences beginning to emerge into view; but it by no means follows that, because Protestants reject a proposition in the sense attached to it

* De Eccles. Mil. c. 2. ad fin.

† Such, for example, as Moehler's preliminary section on the subject. Symbolik, pp. 339—359.

by Romanists, there is no sense in which they admit it. Let it be kept in mind that both parties agree in holding that the Church is, not a voluntary association, but a divine institution; that it must ever give proof of its existence by the exhibition of outward notes, viz. the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the exercise of discipline; and that, as out of the Church there is ordinarily no covenanted salvation, so, except by means of the Church, no one is ordinarily brought to the knowledge of Christ.

But if there is, in fact, so large a field of coincidence between the contending parties, it may seem difficult to conceive what room can be left for a difference, especially for a difference of great moment: and, in truth, here, as well as on some other points, the difference is not absolute but relative; a fact which should always be borne in mind. In many instances, the controversy on points of doctrine between Romanists and Protestants turns, not upon the absolute denial by either party of that which is affirmed by the other, but either upon the degree of importance which each assigns to different aspects of the same subject, or upon the difference of relation in which the constituent elements of the subject are made to stand to each other. Thus, it may be said, in a general way, that the controversy on the subject of justification is reducible to this: — that one side insists more strongly on St. James', the other on St. Paul's, statements respecting the nature of faith; which, however, we know must be reconcilable with each other. So it is in the present case, as we proceed to point out.

The real point of distinction, then, between the two parties, consists, not in one's denying, and the other's maintaining, that the Church may be regarded from a twofold point of view, according as we make what is visible, and what is invisible, in it, the subject of consideration; but in the relative importance, and the relative position, which each party, respectively, assigns to those two aspects of the Church. The difference is this: — the Romanist, while admitting that there is, or ought to be, in the Church an interior life, not cognisable by human eye, yet regards this as a separable accident, and makes the essence of the Church to consist in what is external and visible: the Protestant, on the contrary, while admitting that to be visible is an inseparable property of the Church, makes the essence thereof to consist in what is spiritual and unseen; viz. the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians. The one defines the Church by its outward, the other by its inward, characteristics.

Neither party can absolutely refuse assent to the well-known aphorism of Irenæus, "ubi ecclesia ibi et spiritus Dei; ubi spiritus Dei ibi ecclesia;" but since, in its two clauses, that aphorism may be held to represent different tendencies, on the one hand, to make the presence of the Spirit dependent upon, and posterior in point of time to, the existence of the Church, and, on the other, to make the existence of the Church dependent upon the presence of the Spirit, it accurately expresses the true point of controversy between Romanists and Protestants. To the question, What is the Church? the Romanist replies, that it is a visible institution, in which men are placed in order to be made holy, and thus qualified for the presence of God hereafter; while the answer of the Protestant is, that, according to its true idea (propriè, principaliter dicta,)* it is a society of those who are sanctified (pro ratione hujus vitæ) by the Spirit of God, and possess within them the earnest of the future inheritance: the former holds that to constitute a person a member of the Church, and therefore a member of Christ himself, it suffices that he *profess* the Christian faith, partake outwardly of the Sacraments, and be subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome; the latter maintains that he only properly belongs to the Church who is in vital union with the Saviour by faith, and partakes of the quickening influence of Christ's Spirit. The distinction which the Romanist admits to exist between the living and the dead members of the Church, does not affect his definition of the latter, for he makes a distinction between church-membership and a state of salvation; the latter, indeed, can only be affirmed of those who are renewed in heart, but the former may be enjoyed even by those who are living in mortal sin. Divesting thus the idea of the Church, in its ultimate state, of everything moral, that is, making it a thing indifferent to the idea whether the Spirit of God, in His sanctifying influences, be present or not, he is, of course, compelled to consider the Church as, primarily, an external institution; the *differentia*, or specific difference, of which lies in its polity, its rites, or its episcopal succession. The Protestant, on the contrary, can make no distinction between being a member of the Church, and being in a state of salvation; and as, confessedly, an inward change, the work of the Spirit, is necessary to salvation, for "unless a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," it is, in his eyes, equally necessary to true Church-membership; or, in other words, he defines the Church to

* Apol. Conf. Aug. Art. 7. s. 25.

be, primarily, a community of saints, making the presence of the Spirit the specific difference of the body, its visible polity a matter of secondary moment. Or, the difference may be thus stated: the Romanist regards that which is visible in the Church as the antecedent; the Protestant as the consequent of the life within: the former attributes a positive and independent value to the outward characteristics of the body; the latter values them chiefly as the evidences of the unseen work of the spirit. Moehler is fairer and more accurate than usual, when he says, "that the difference between the Protestant and the Romanist view of the Church may be briefly stated as follows: — the Romanist teaches that the visible Church is first in the order of time, afterwards the invisible; the relation of the former to the latter being that of cause and effect. The Lutherans (Protestants), on the contrary, affirm that the visible Church owes its existence to the invisible, the latter being the true basis of the former."* He adds, very justly, that this apparently unimportant difference of view is pregnant with important results.

That the difference of view just mentioned lies at the root of the statements of the rival Confessions will be evident from the most cursory inspection of them. To recur to the positions of the Romish Catechism. Were we to frame from them a definition of the Church, it would be, that it is a company of men professing faith in Christ, outwardly partaking of the Sacraments, and in communion with the Roman pontiff; it being, as regards the idea, a matter of indifference whether they be, or be not, sanctified by the Spirit of God. That this is the true doctrine of Rome is evident from the frequency and emphasis with which the Catechism affirms that both the good and the evil are, though in a different sense, yet equally as far as the definition, which expresses the idea of the thing defined, is concerned, members of the Church; for, if this be true, it is clear that the essential being of the Church must lie, not in the internal work of the Holy Spirit, which, confessedly, as an active principle of holiness, is not found in all who are visibly within the ecclesiastical pale, but in that which may be common to the evil and the good; viz. subjection to the same central authority, and outward participation in the same Sacraments. The unrenewed in heart can, equally with those who are led by the Holy Spirit, *profess* faith in Christ, "carnally and visibly press with" their "teeth the sacrament of the body and

* Symbolik, pp. 425, 426.

blood of Christ," and be under the jurisdiction of lawful pastors; and if this is all that is meant by being a member of Christ, that is, if internal union with the Saviour is not essential to the idea of the Church, most true it is that no reason exists why we should not apply that title to those whose lives prove them to be destitute of sanctifying faith, so long as they are not openly excommunicated. The Jew, however morally corrupt he might be, yet, as long as he fulfilled the requirements of the ceremonial law, was a recognised member of the Hebrew commonwealth and entitled to the temporal privileges thereto belonging; from which we justly infer that the Jewish economy was one rather of the letter than of the spirit, and had its essential being in its polity and ceremonial. The same inference must be drawn with respect to the Christian dispensation, if it be true, as the Romish Catechism affirms, that the good and the evil are equally members of the Church, and equally partakers of Christian privileges.

The statements of private theologians are not, as has been already observed, to be esteemed of equal weight with those set forth by authority: there is one writer, however, of such deservedly great estimation among those of his own communion as to render his expositions of doctrine of the greatest value in ascertaining the true meaning of the Romish formularies; I mean Bellarmin. If any doubt should exist whether the Romish conception of the Church be really what it has been described to be, it will be removed by the statements of that eminent authority. The definition which Bellarmin gives of the Church is as follows: "It is a society of men united by a profession of the same Christian faith, and a participation of the same sacraments, under the government of lawful pastors, and especially of the one Vicar of Christ upon earth, the Roman pontiff. Of this definition there are three parts:—the profession of the true faith; communion in the sacraments; and subjection to the pastoral authority of the Bishop of Rome. By the first they are excluded who either, as the Jews, the Turks, or the heathen, never belonged to the Church, or, as heretics, have seceded from her. By the second are excluded catechumens and excommunicated persons (their communion in the sacraments being deferred or suspended); and, by the third, schismatics, or they who, though professing the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and celebrating the sacraments, are not subject to the one legitimate pastor. All others, even impious and reprobate men, are included in the definition; for the Church is a society of men as visible and palpable as the Roman people, the kingdom of

France, or the republic of Venice."* It is not that the Romanist denies that the end for which the divine institution, called the Church, was established, is to lead its members eventually to holiness; or that it would, were there no living members of Christ within its pale, be in a very imperfect state, and fail of its proper end. What he does deny is, that the inward work of the Spirit, as evidenced in newness of life, is necessary to the idea of the Church, or of its essence: he makes sanctifying faith in Christ an accident, not the very being, of true Church-membership. And, quite consistently with the general view which Bellarmin, as above quoted, presents us with, the attributes of the Church are, by the Romish Catechism, considered almost exclusively under an external aspect. The unity of the Church is made to consist, principally, in its profession of "one faith," "one Lord," and in its subjection to one visible head. Its sanctity is such as may equally be predicated of inanimate objects, consecrated to holy uses; that is, it consists primarily in an outward dedication to the service of Christ. The two remaining properties, Catholicity and Apostolicity, are, necessarily, more or less of an external character; but the latter of them is interpreted in the least spiritual sense admissible, when it is made to consist, chiefly, in visible government by a ministry derived by succession from the Apostles. Such premises as these are manifestly necessary to warrant the conclusion, that persons living in mortal sin are, nevertheless, so long as they remain in communion with the Bishop of Rome, members — real, though not perhaps lively, members — of the true Church.

On the other hand, if we set out with the supposition that what constitutes the true being of the Church is, not that in it which meets the eye, but the unseen presence of the Spirit of God, sanctifying true believers, the peculiarities of the Protestant view, as distinguished from that of Rome, are at once accounted for, and the statements of the Reformed formularies justified. For, on this supposition, it is plain that the Church, in its truth, is not, and cannot be, in this life, visibly manifested; it being impossible for human eye to discriminate accurately between the true and the nominal followers of Christ; and not being visibly manifested in its corporate capacity, it can have no visible head. Hence, too, (since properties follow the nature of the subject in which they inhere,) according to Protestant teaching, the unity and sanctity of

* "Includuntur autem omnes alii, etiamsi reprobi, scelesti, et impii sint. Ecclesia enim est cœtus hominum ita visibilis et palpabilis, ut est cœtus populi Romani, aut regnum Galliæ, aut respublica Venetorum." — De Eccles. Mil. c. 2.

the Church are inward before they become outward, participation in the same Spirit constituting the essential bond of union among Christians. Hence, finally, it is that the Protestant, while he admits that unrenewed men may, and indeed must, be found in every visible Church, denies that they are members of the Church, *i. e.* of the Church in its truth; denies, that is, that the latter is a body of mixed composition, comprehending within its pale both those who are, and those who are not, led by the Spirit of God. To admit that unsanctified men are true members of the true Church would obviously lead to the Romish doctrine, that the latter is a visible institution, under a visible head, its essential being lying in its visible characteristics.

If it should seem strange to the reader that a mere relative difference in the mode of viewing the same object should give rise to systems of very opposite character, he has only to remember that most of the errors that have appeared in the Church, both in past and present times, have arisen from giving an undue prominence to what in itself is an undoubted truth. Thus Arian tendencies spring from dwelling too exclusively upon the humanity of Christ; while the opposite error of the Docetæ, which manifested itself under so many forms in the first two centuries, may be traced to a similar exclusiveness of view with respect to His divinity. Sabellianism took its rise from not counterbalancing the declarations of the Old Testament, respecting the Unity of God, with the equally clear statements of the New Testament respecting the Trinity in Unity. Certain declarations of St. Paul on the subject of justification, misunderstood, have led to Antinomianism: certain others of St. James, taken alone, have given rise to a type of sentiment equally erroneous. By taking too exclusive a view of the agency of divine grace in the work of conversion, Calvin was led to make rash statements on the subject of predestination: by unduly magnifying man's part in that work, anti-Calvinists have verged towards Pelagianism. It must not, then, be thought necessarily a trifling difference, or one of words merely, when we say that the controversy between Romanists and Protestants, in reference to the idea of the Church, is reducible to the question, Does the true being of the Church lie in its external characteristics, or in its unseen life? or, to put the same question in another form, Is the life within the foundation and source of that which is visible in the Church; or, on the contrary, is that which is visible the foundation and source of the life within? Questions, which are by no means decided by the bare acknow-

ledgment on both sides, that the Church, according as it is regarded from different points of view, is both visible and invisible.

If confirmation of this mode of stating the real question at issue be needed, it will be found in the following statements of the same trust-worthy expounder of Romanism, to whom allusion has been already made: — "This," says Bellarmin, "is the distinction between our view and that of the Protestants, that they, to constitute any one a member of the Church, require *internal virtues*, (*i. e.* the work of the Spirit in the heart,) and consequently make the true Church invisible: we, on the contrary, believe indeed that all internal graces, faith, hope, charity, &c., will be *found in the* Church, but we deny that to constitute a man a member of the true Church, *any internal virtue is requisite*, but only an *external* profession of the faith, and that participation of the sacraments which is perceptible by the senses" (*i. e.* which is merely outward).* Which, as is evident, is equivalent to saying, that Protestants make the inward fellowship of the Spirit essential, Romanists non-essential, to the idea of the Church in its truth.

In conclusion, it may be proper to remind the reader, that both parties accept the statements of the three creeds on the subject of the Church, however different may be the interpretation of them which they respectively adopt. Both parties believe in the existence of the "one Holy Catholic Church," though they may not attach exactly the same meaning to that article of faith. Nor are we compelled to adopt any particular interpretation of it, as the only admissible one. It may be true that the fathers generally expound it in a particular way, and that their expositions deserve our respectful attention: but before the Protestant can attribute a binding authority to them, he must be assured, first, that the creeds are the production of, not merely Apostolic times, but of the Apostles; and secondly, that the fathers are to be considered as unerring expounders of the meaning of these formularies. It is needless to say that neither of these positions can be established. While it is very probable that the Apostles employed some short summary of the principal articles of the Christian faith, as a form

* De Eccles. Mil. c. 2. As this passage contains the hinge of the whole controversy, the original is here subjoined. "Hoc interest inter sententiam nostram, et alias omnes, quòd omnes aliæ requirunt internas virtutes ad constituendum aliquem in ecclesiâ, et propterea ecclesiam veram invisibilem faciunt; nos autem et credimus in ecclesiâ inveniri omnes virtutes, fidem, spem, caritatem, et cæteras; tamen ut aliquis aliquo modo dici possit pars veræ ecclesiæ, non putamus requiri ullam internam virtutem, sed tantum externam professionem fidei, et sacramentorum communionem quæ sensu ipso percipitur."

of baptismal confession,* we have no certain evidence that the creed which now passes under their name proceeded from them; the fable of each of the twelve having contributed an article to it having been long since exploded. Indeed, the loose manner in which the earliest fathers recite the baptismal confessions used in their times, and the variations which occur in these summaries themselves, sufficiently prove that no fixed form of the kind really descended from the Apostles: otherwise, it would have been preserved with the same jealous care with which the New Testament Scriptures themselves were. With respect to the particular article in question, internal evidence would lead us to assign to it a later date than to the rest of the creed; for it would hardly have been deemed necessary to make the Church an article of faith, until its existence seemed endangered by heresies and schisms. This surmise is confirmed by historical testimony. No trace of the article is found before Tertullian, who, however, alludes to it as, in his time, forming part of the profession of faith made at the baptismal font. From Cyprian downward, it is certain that it had a fixed place amongst the baptismal interrogatories.† As to the expositions which the fathers give of its meaning, it is obvious that we are no more bound by them, than we are by their interpretations of the article which speaks of "the forgiveness of sins."

* Traces of such a summary may be thought to be visible in Scripture itself. Compare 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, and 1 Tim. iii. 16.

† "Sed et ipsa interrogatio quæ fit in baptismo testis est veritatis. Nam cum dicimus, Credis in vitam æternam et remissionem pec catorum per sanctam ecclesiam?" &c. (Epist. 70. Edit. Baluz.) The various reading which Cyprian here presents us with is worthy of observation.

PART II.

DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTION.

CHAPTER I.

METHOD OF THE INQUIRY.

THE foregoing observations have done little more than put us in possession of the fundamental difference between the Romish and the Protestant idea of the Church, as expressed in the definitions adopted by the two parties: the inquiry now about to be instituted relates to the truth or error of these definitions. The Romanist defines the Church by its outward, the Protestant by its inward, characteristics: the former makes its essence to consist in its visible rites and polity; the other holds that its true being lies in its spiritual, and therefore unseen, union with Christ. Which of these views is the true one? This is the question now before us.

But here the previous question meets us, What are we to regard as the authoritative source of truth in matters of religion? By what test are we to try doctrines which present themselves to us with, as far as human authority is concerned, equal pretensions? A question which itself is differently answered by Romanists and Protestants. And here, in truth, lies the real difficulty of their arriving at any mutual understanding. We differ from Romanists, not merely on this or that particular point of doctrine, but upon the ultimate authority by which all doctrinal statements are to be tried. Ever since the Council of Trent decided that ecclesiastical tradition is to be regarded as of equal authority with Scripture,* and consequently of equal force in proof of doctrine, there has existed an apparently insuperable impediment to a reconciliation between the two parties: for, before such can take place, one or the other must abandon that which constitutes the formal principle of its system; on the Romish side, the doctrine

* "Omnes libros tam veteris quam Novi Testamenti . . . necnon traditiones ipsas, tum ad fidem, tum ad mores pertinentes . . . pari pietatis affectu et reverentia suscipit et veneratur (Synodus.)" Sess. 4ta.

of an unwritten word of God; on the Protestant, the supreme authority and sufficiency of Holy Scripture in matters of faith. The source of revelation, the *principium cognoscendi* in religion, is not the same to both; hence it should seem that every attempt to reconcile their differences must prove abortive. Romanists must give up their doctrine of tradition, — that is, become Protestants, — or Protestants must receive it, — that is, become Romanists, — before the argument can be conducted on any common basis: hence the inconvenience, constantly felt, of arguing with Romanists on particular points of the controversy, before the great question of the rule of faith is settled.

In this point, too, lies the great distinction between the doctrinal system of the fifth and sixth centuries and later Romanism. The impulse, which recent events have in this country communicated to the study of the patristic remains, has had the effect of dissipating the illusive splendour with which it had become the custom to invest the early Church, and of teaching us that, even in the time of Cyprian, the principles, of which Tridentine Romanism is the mature development, were actively at work in the Christian body. On one important point, however, we can claim the great divines of the period just mentioned as our own: they, with us, taught the supreme authority of Scripture in controversies of faith. What Cyprian and Augustin call Apostolic traditions, are either the writings of the New Testament themselves, and the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, as expressed in the Apostles' Creed; or the few regulations of polity, such as episcopacy, which could be really traced up to Apostles. Neither of these eminent fathers felt any scruple in recommending a departure from ecclesiastical custom, however ancient, when it appeared to them to be inconsistent with the Word of God.* If they laid the foundations of the Church system, they did so on Protestant

* "Nec consuetudo quæ apud quosdam direpserat impedire debet quominus veritas prævalcat et vincat. Nam consuetudo sine veritate vetustas erroris est. Quam veritatem nobis Christus ostendens in evangelio suo dicit, Ego sum veritas. In compendio est apud religiosas et simplices mentes et errorem deponere et eruere veritatem. Nam si ad divinæ traditionis caput et originem revertamur, cessat error humanus. Quod et nunc facere oportet Dei sacerdotes præcepta divina servantes, ut si in aliquo nutaverit et vacillaverit veritas, ad originem dominicam et ad evangelicam atque apostolicam traditionem revertamur." (Cyp. Epist. 74. ad Pomp.) What Cyprian means by "Apostolica traditio" appears from the instance that immediately follows: — "Traditum est enim nobis quod sit unus Deus et Christus unus, et una spes, et fides una, et una ecclesia, et baptisma unum." Compare Augustin, Cont. Cres. lib. ii. s. 39. "Neque enim sine causa tam salubri vigilantia canon ecclesiasticus constitutus est, ad quem certi prophetarum et apostolorum libri pertineant, quos omnino judicare non audeamus, et secundum quos de cæteris litteris vel fidelium vel infidelium libere judicemus."

principles: they appealed to Scripture in support of their views; nor did it ever occur to them that the inspired writings were not both clear enough to convey their meaning to an unprejudiced mind, and full enough to need no supplementary additions. We may, indeed, sometimes question the soundness of their interpretations of Scripture; we may be at a loss to conceive how Cyprian, for example, could have persuaded himself that, according to the Apostles' teaching, Christian ministers are sacrificing priests, and the Eucharist a proper sacrifice: it is certain, however, that by Scripture only, in the last resort, they professed to be guided. In this, as in many other instances, Protestantism, not less than Romanism, can draw its own proper nutriment from the records of Christian antiquity.

In the following pages, the formal principle of Protestantism—viz. that Scripture is the only authentic record we possess of what Christianity was intended to be by its Divine Founder—is assumed as admitted; the discussion of it belonging to another branch of the Romish controversy. Even to the Romanist it must ever be a matter of importance to endeavour to prove that Scripture is on his side; for if he will not allow that it is the only authentic record which we possess of Apostolic teaching, he has not yet advanced so far as to deny that it is an undoubted record of that teaching, and, as such, entitled to high consideration. Indeed, a lurking sense of the inconvenience of appearing to contradict Scripture betrays itself in the trouble which Romish controversialists often give themselves, of adducing scriptural proof for the distinctive tenets of their Church; a labour which, on their principles, must be regarded as superfluous, since the doctrine of the infallibility of the existing Church is sufficient to sustain the weight of any superstructure that may be raised upon it. Moreover, it must be remembered that, throughout the present work, the particular object aimed at is, not so much to encounter Romanism in its concrete and mature form of the Papacy, as to investigate the interior principles upon which the system rests; principles which pervaded the Church long before the Bishop of Rome proclaimed himself her visible head, and which are now, amongst ourselves, at work in quarters where Romanism, as such, is rejected, and the patristic doctrine of the supremacy and sufficiency of Scripture has not as yet been abandoned. With those who belong to this school of theology, a purely scriptural argument may still be supposed to possess some weight.

Scripture being recognised as the authoritative source of divine truth, it still remains to select the particular method to be followed in conducting the inquiry. It does not appear, then, that the question before us can ever be satisfactorily decided by a logical discussion of texts, extracted from the sacred writings, or by *a priori* considerations drawn from the nature of the case. Indeed the arguments of the latter kind which Romanists are so fond of urging are, for this reason among others, irrelevant to the question, that they prove nothing but what is fully admitted by the opposite party. For example; we are reminded that the essential distinction between natural and revealed religion is, that the former rests merely upon a subjective basis, while the latter appeals to external credentials, and comes to man from without; that is, proposes itself to his acceptance as a system of facts, doctrines, and ordinances, which remain what they are whether he accept them or not, and possess an objective existence, external to the human mind. Thus Moehler, arguing against the Protestant doctrine — that the invisible Church (to adopt the usual, but inaccurate form of expression) is the basis of the visible, — directs our attention to the fact that "when Christ began to preach the kingdom of God, it existed only in Himself, and in the Divine idea. It came to men from without; first to the Apostles, whom the Divine Word, in human form, prepared, by means of instruction and discipline, for their future office: afterwards, by means of the Apostles and their successors, it was proposed to the acceptance of the world at large, which, as had been the case with the Apostles themselves, received the message of Salvation from without, antecedently to its being grafted in the heart. Thus the rule was, that the invisible Church was called into existence by the visible, the former being subsequent, in order of time, to the latter. This order of things was rendered necessary by the very notion of an external, historical, revelation; which seems, from its nature, to require a fixed external ministry of the word, to which every one, who would make himself acquainted with the revelation, may have recourse for instruction." * Or, again, much stress is laid upon the fact that in the Christian dispensation the "Word" is seen becoming "flesh," Deity and humanity coalescing into an inseparable union. "Had the Word, instead of becoming corporeally visible, insinuated Himself in an invisible manner into the hearts of men, it would have been consistent that He

* Symbolik, p. 426.

should found a mere invisible Church: but when He manifested Himself under a visible form, and acted and suffered as a man, He intimated, in a manner not to be mistaken, what, after His departure from earth should be the nature of the means employed to set forward His saving work in the world. The preaching of the Gospel required human preachers: man must, as in the sphere of ordinary life, teach man. And, as in common life, no valuable results are obtained without combination, Christ also, in accordance with the order of nature, instituted a society of His followers, closely compacted and visible, in which He still lives upon earth, and which is the organ of His Spirit. Considered from this point of view, the Church may be said to be the perpetual incarnation of Christ upon earth; as indeed it is styled in Scripture, His body."* Or, finally, it is urged that all religions which have exercised any considerable sway over mankind have been enshrined in a framework of visible institutions, without the sheltering aid of which they could not have maintained themselves for any length of time. Whether we survey the religions of the East or the West, the speculative theosophy of the Hindoo, or the more sensuous mythology of ancient Greece and Rome, we find the national faith embodying itself in fixed visible institutions, with a prescribed ceremonial and a fixed polity. In no other way can a religious system exert an effective control over the corrupt propensities of human nature. For man is a being composed both of body and of spirit; and therefore, he needs, if the whole of his nature is to be influenced, an outward ceremonial, as well as the invisible worship of the heart.

Considerations of this kind may, indeed, be urged with effect against the principles of Quakerism, but they are wholly irrelevant to the real point in dispute between Romanists and Protestants. What Protestant denies that the Holy Spirit works not, ordinarily, save through external instruments, namely, the preaching of the Word, and the sacraments; or that Christ intended His followers to form a visible Church? In fact, it especially concerns the Protestant that the great truth be not forgotten, that revealed religion, as distinguished from natural, must come to man from without, and present a system of truths which he is to receive, not frame for himself. For it is one of the distinctive features of Pro-

* Moehler, Symb. p. 337. This notion of the Church's being the perpetual incarnation of Christ upon earth is a favourite one with the modern school of philosophical Romanists. It forms the basis of the so-called "sacramental theory," and of every type of doctrine which makes the Church to be the "representative" of Christ upon earth.

testant theology, as distinguished from that of Rome which has always been Pelagian in its tendencies, that it takes a deep view of the corruption of human nature through the fall, and the consequent inability of man, while destitute of divine grace, to arrive at the true knowledge of God. It is the Romanist, holding as he does, that original sin consists merely in a deprivation of the gift of original righteousness, superadded, as a separable thing, to Adam's nature; and that, with this exception, man is now in as upright a state as he was previously to the fall;* who is likely to undervalue the importance of an external revelation, and to substitute for it, when given, the religion of the natural heart. In fact, writers have undertaken to prove, and not without success, that the peculiar tenets of Romanism have arisen, not from adhering too closely to the external record, but from following, in opposition to it, the dictates of unenlightened reason.† If the case were so, that Protestants rejected all authority in religion save the private feeling, or judgment, of individuals, or did away with positive ordinances altogether, regarding the Church as a purely invisible communion of saints, the *à priori* arguments just mentioned might reasonably be urged against them: but it has been shewn at length that a false spiritualism of this kind belongs as little to their theory as to that of their opponents.

Reasonings of this kind obviously fail of advancing the question a step nearer its solution, and leave us where they found us. Nor, as has been observed, is much to be expected from exegetical inquiries into the meaning of certain passages of the New Testament. There remains open to us the method of historical inquiry; or, an actual observation of the course which divine revelation has held, from the time when it was committed to the custody of the chosen people, to its completion in Christianity: and this, in fact, is the only method which promises to lead to a satisfactory decision of the question under discussion.

If it be asked, why we select this particular epoch — viz. the establishment of the Jewish dispensation — as the starting-point of the inquiry, neither going back to the first communications of God to man, nor at once proceeding to the New Testament, and examining what it teaches us concerning the constitution of the Chris-

* "Quare non magis differt status hominis post lapsum Adæ à statu ejusdem in puris naturalibus quam differt spoliatus à nudo: neque deterior est humana natura, si culpam originalem detrahas, neque magis ignorantia et infirmitate laborat quam esset et laboraret in puris naturalibus condita." — Bellarm. De Grat. Prim. Hom. c. 5.

† See Whately's "Errors of Romanism traced to their origin in human nature."

tian Church; the answer is to be found, partly in the nature of the question before us, and partly in the peculiar relation in which the Christian dispensation stands to the Jewish. The question with which we have to do, relates not so much to the *doctrines* which, from the first obscurely intimated, were openly promulgated by Christ and His Apostles, as to the *society* in which the Christian dispensation is embodied, its nature and constitution; and before the giving of the Law, the people of God constituted no society in the proper sense of the word. Previously to that event, indeed, intimations had been given, from time to time, to favoured individuals concerning the promised Saviour; and even the first steps had been taken towards the accomplishment of the promise, by the calling of Abraham, and the constituting of his descendants into a distinct people: but it was not until more than four hundred years afterwards, when the word of promise had so far taken effect as that the posterity of Abraham had, in fact, become a considerable people, that anything like a religious society, or polity, of divine origin, existed in the world: then, however, such a polity was established by the promulgation of the Mosaic law. Ever since that time, the people of God have formed a distinct society in the world; the features, and constitution, of the society differing, according as it was founded upon the principles of the Jewish, or the Christian, dispensation. But if, for this reason, it is unnecessary to ascend higher in the history of revelation than the giving of the Law, so, on the other hand, we must, if we would form accurate notions of the Christian dispensation, and of the society founded upon it, ascertain clearly the nature of the preparatory economy of Moses. For Christianity is the historical offspring of Judaism, to which it bears the same relation which the full-grown man does to the child.* Christianity is not an isolated phenomenon in the history of the world, but the last of a long series of preparatory appointments, with which, as might be expected, it exhibits points both of agreement and of contrast; the latter being nearly as important as the former. The direction which the preparatory revelation from the first assumed; the point to which it manifestly tended; the line of progression in which it moved:— these are points which demand our most careful consideration, if we would form a right judgment concerning that final dispensation which is the consummation of all that preceded it. Thus, to borrow an illustration from the science of physiology, the human

* See Heb. x. 1. Gal. iv. 1–5.

body, the most perfect specimen of animal organisation, is but the last link in a long series of developments, which, commencing with the lowest forms of animal life, advance step by step to higher ones, giving throughout indications of what the end of the series will be. Each stage in the ascending scale is an advance upon the one that precedes it, and itself serves to prepare the way for a still more perfect form; until, at length, those organs, the rudiments of which were found, in a more or less advanced state, in the inferior animals, exhibit themselves in full perfection in the frame of man. It is owing to this law of progression that an experienced physiologist can often, from an observation of an organ in its rudimental state, pronounce, with tolerable accuracy, what it would be in its perfect form, even should no actual specimen of the latter be in existence.

The historical survey which it is thus proposed to take, naturally arranges itself under the two great divisions of the old and new dispensations; the latter commencing with the outpouring of the Spirit upon the day of Pentecost. With respect to the elder economy, every reader of the New Testament will have observed that, by the writers of the Christian Scriptures, it is viewed, in reference to Christianity, under a twofold aspect, according as they speak of it as opposed, and as preparatory, to that of the Gospel; a circumstance which is easily accounted for by our distinguishing between the law of Moses as it was in itself, and the effects which, when viewed in conjunction with that extra-legal institute which played so conspicuous a part in the Mosaic dispensation, — the institute of prophecy, — it was calculated to, and actually did, produce upon those who were placed under it. In itself, the Law was contrary to the Gospel: in its spiritual operation, aided as that was by the prophetic revelation, it prepared the way for Christ. A consideration of the law in the former point of view will bear indirectly upon the question before us; for what the Law was in itself, we may at once presume the Gospel not to be; while, in its latter aspect, as introductory to Christianity, the ancient economy will combine with the New Testament Scriptures to furnish the direct portion of the argument. In that part of the discussion, then, which relates to the ancient dispensation, the leading points of inquiry will be: — the nature and principles of the law of Moses, as a religious institute; the necessary operation of it upon the pious part of the Jewish people; the scope and tendency of the prophetic revelation; and the ministry of John the Baptist, together with that of Christ Himself, which may be

regarded as the conclusion of the legal economy. In the other division of the argument, the subject of consideration will be the Christian Church itself, as it appears in the Acts of the Apostles, with its sacraments, and so much of its Apostolic polity as is found recorded in that inspired history of the first promulgation of the Gospel; the higher stages of its visible organisation being reserved for discussion in another place. The structure of the Apostolic Epistles, addressed to existing Christian Churches, will, in the last place, come under our notice.

CHAPTER II.

THE JEWISH DISPENSATION.

Section I.

THE LAW OF MOSES—ITS NATURE AS A RELIGIOUS SYSTEM.

No sooner had man fallen than a promise was given, couched indeed in indistinct terms, of a Deliverer to come, who, Himself "the seed of the woman," should "bruise the serpent's head," and restore man to the state of dignity and happiness which he had forfeited through sin. The event predicted in this original prophecy—viz., the coming of Christ in human nature—is thenceforward the scope of all revelation, the central point of God's providential dispensations.

Why more than 4000 years were permitted to elapse between the giving of this promise, and its fulfilment, must ever remain a mystery not to be perfectly fathomed by human reason. Meanwhile, we may be certain that the advent of the Messiah was delayed no longer than was necessary; and one, at least, of the reasons of the delay we may reasonably surmise to be, the necessity which existed of men's passing through a process of preparation to fit them to receive the Gospel. The sacred history teaches us that the effects of the fall were speedily visible in the universal corruption of mankind. The knowledge of the true God, with His attributes and perfections, being lost, and no standard of right and wrong presenting itself save the imperfect "work of the law written" on the natural heart, the world, as might have been anticipated, became, not only fearfully depraved, but likewise, with few exceptions, unconscious of its fallen state, and therefore indifferent to the means of recovery from it. Had the Saviour appeared amongst men at this stage of their moral progress, He would have found them wholly unprepared for the reception of the truths which centre in his Person and work. Hence, the course pursued by the Divine wisdom was, to lead our race through a gradual course of preparatory training, by means of which the most influential portions of it, at least, might be

fitted to embrace the Gospel whensoever it should please its Divine author to propound it to their acceptance.

As regards the heathen world, this process of preparation was merely negative. The heathens were left to themselves, in order that, by actual experience, they might become convinced of man's inability to raise himself to God. A conviction of man's moral weakness, and of the folly of the popular systems of idolatry, together with a general craving, amongst earnest inquirers, for some unquestionably Divine revelation to remove the obscurity which hung over their present condition and future prospects;—this was the amount of illumination, if it may be so called, vouchsafed to the pagan world. Enlightened heathens, at the period when Christ came, were prepared to receive Christianity, simply because every school of philosophy, and every mythical system, had confessed its insufficiency to meet the spiritual wants of man.

But it is obvious that something more than this was necessary to secure a footing for the Gospel scheme, whenever it should be promulgated. There needed to exist somewhere a positive groundwork of religious illumination, with which Christianity might connect itself; a rudimental outline of which Christianity should be the filling up. Especially was it desirable that such a basis of religious knowledge should exist in that particular locality in which the promised Saviour was to be born, and where His earthly pilgrimage was to run its course. Such a favoured spot would form a nucleus whence the rays of Divine light might be disseminated throughout the world.

This special, and positive, preparation for the introduction of Christianity was effected by an immediate interposition of God One people, while yet in the loins of its progenitor Abraham, was selected from the nations of the earth, to be the repository of such revelations concerning Himself, and His designs, as it should please God to communicate. At a period when, probably, idolatry had become universal, Abraham, the father of the chosen people, was separated from his country and kindred, and with his posterity, made the subject of a special covenant with God. In due season, when the descendants of the Patriarch had become sufficiently numerous to form a distinct nation, they were led forth, under the conduct of Moses, from their place of temporary sojourn, and put in possession of the land promised to their fathers. At the same time, they received from God, through the mediation of Moses, that code of law, civil, moral, and ceremonial, under which they continued to exist, until the temple of Jerusalem was de-

stroyed. It was amongst this people, thus placed under a peculiar economy, that Christ, when He should appear, was to find existing such a measure of religious knowledge, and such elements of religious feeling, as should make the transition from Judaism to Christianity easy and natural. Upon the nature and principles of the law of Moses, as a religious institute, we are now to make some observations.

To prevent the doctrine of the Unity of the Godhead from being lost amidst the corruptions of heathenism; to provide a keeper and witness of the ancient oracles of God; to be a schoolmaster to lead the Jew to Christ:—these are acknowledged to be the principal ends which God had in view in the constitution of the Jewish people and polity. The question now before us is, On what principle was that polity constructed, so as to bring about the proposed ends?

A legal dispensation is, as its name imports, one, the pervading principle of which is to work from without inwards, or to form, by means of discipline and habituation, certain habits of thought and feeling in those who are placed under it. The term "law" in its proper meaning, and especially as it is used by St. Paul in his Epistles, denotes a rule of conduct, whether external or internal, which, deriving its authority from some superior power, operates upon the subject by constraint, and, therefore, presupposes a certain degree of indisposition towards its requirements; or, at least, a feebleness of moral self-determination which needs an external prop to support it. When, therefore, we speak of an inward law, or of a man's being a law to himself, we use language which, however intelligible, is not strictly accurate; for, properly speaking, that only is a law to a man which, whether it concern itself with overt acts only, or (which human laws never do) with the inward intention, comes to him from without, and is supposed not to be coincident with the will. Hooker, in the following passage, accurately points out the province of law:—"Laws politic" (the observation applies equally to all kinds of law), "ordained for external order and regiment amongst men, are never framed as they should be, unless presuming the will of man to be inwardly obstinate, rebellious, and averse from all obedience unto the sacred laws of his nature; in a word, unless presuming man to be, in regard of his depraved mind, little better than a wild beast, they do accordingly provide, notwithstanding, so to frame his outward actions, that they be no hindrance unto the common good for

which societies are instituted."* And a far greater authority than Hooker reminds us, that "the law" (so far forth as it is law) "is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly, and for sinners."†

The mode of operation peculiar to a legal system is, as has been observed, from without inwards, or by external discipline. Presupposing, either that the natural bent of the will is opposed to the things enjoined, or that the moral judgment is immature and needs direction, it proposes, by means of a forcible pressure from without, to impart the required bias. Instead of presuming the will to be rectified, it aims at subduing it to that of the lawgiver. Its primary object is, rather to form, than to direct, the internal habit. Hence, when a religious system is constructed on the legal principle, it contents itself, at first, with prescribing the outward act, and with external obedience, careless of the motive whence that obedience springs, whether fear or love: it lays down particular rules, enjoins specific acts of religious worship, appoints "days and months and times and years," instead of general principles issues particular enactments, and regulates from without the manner in which God is to be served. Its appointments necessarily wear an arbitrary and artificial aspect; for the intention being to curb the irregular propensities of the undisciplined heart, and to give a specific direction to whatever feelings of a pious nature may be in existence, positive enactments, the *reason* of which is not apparent to the worshipper, must be multiplied, and the more arbitrary these enactments, the better adapted are they to secure the proposed end. The unchastised will must be met, and overcome, by provisions which may seem to have no other recommendation than that they run counter to the will, and by so doing tend to make it pliable.

On the other hand, it is evident that where internal habits of true piety are supposed to be present, and the command, instead of standing over against the individual, is, in Scriptural language, "written upon his heart;" where the will of man and the will of God are supposed to be in unison, and, therefore, moral precepts take the place of legal enactments, and specific prescriptions give way to general principles; — the law, though it may still be in force, loses its proper character, and the religious dispensation, of which these are the characteristics, is so far opposed to a legal one.

The nature of a legal system may be illustrated from the in-

* Eccles. Pol. book i. c. x. † 1 Tim. i. 9.

stances of it which the common course of nature supplies. Thus, as Hooker remarks, political government is conducted on the legal principle. The legislator enjoins, or prohibits, what he conceives to be conducive, or injurious, to the well-being of the state, enforcing his enactments by temporal sanctions; and his whole work proceeds on the supposition of there being either no spontaneous direction of will towards what is required, or none such as can be safely left to itself, on the part of the governed. The law anticipates resistance to its requisitions, or, at least, an unwillingness to comply with them; and it secures obedience, by making the consequences of transgression so formidable as to outweigh the gratification derived from the indulgence of passion. In order, however, to gain a true analogy between a religious, and a political, system of law, we must turn, not so much to modern theories of government, which teach us that the office of the legislator is negative rather than positive, and is concerned chiefly with the protection of life and property, and the removal of hindrances to the national progress; as to the ancient notion of a State, according to which the latter is to be regarded as a school of virtue, and its laws as an educational discipline, for the citizens; — such an idea as floated before the mind of Plato when describing his imaginary republic, and of Aristotle.* In actual history, the legislation of Sparta, and the effects which it is said to have produced upon the national character, present the most remarkable instance on record of the nature and operation of a system which proposes to work upon man from without inwards.

More to the point, as being of a more internal and positive character, is the illustration furnished by the work of educating the young, especially that part of it which consists in moral discipline, and the formation of character: indeed, the analogy between the office of a schoolmaster, and that which the law of Moses discharged towards the Israelites, is distinctly recognized in Scripture.† The process of education is conducted, especially in its elementary stages, upon the legal principle. Discipline, and habituation are the teacher's main instruments. All that he expects, at the commencement of his operations, to find present in his pupil, is, innate capacities upon which virtuous habits may be ingrafted; the habits themselves — such, for example, as truthfulness, honour,

* Μαρτυρεῖ δὲ καὶ τὸ γινόμενον ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν· οἱ γὰρ νομοθέται τοὺς πολίτας ἐθίζοντες ποιοῦσιν ἀγαθούς· καὶ τὸ μὲν βούλημα παντὸς νομοθέτου τοῦτ' ἔστιν. Ethic. Nic. l. 2. c. 1.

† Gal. iv. 2, 3.

patience, self-restraint, and attention — he proposes to form by degrees, to work into the character by a course of suitable discipline.* He begins by laying down specific rules, to which he requires unquestioning obedience. Those virtuous acts which a man of mature moral training performs spontaneously, the teacher *compels* those placed under his care to perform, in order that he may thus strengthen the immature principles of good implanted in the heart. While the moral sense is as yet feeble, he connects the idea of present suffering with vice, and present enjoyment with virtue; a mode of treatment which is laid aside in proportion as the pupil advances in judgment, and in quickness of moral perception. As regards merely intellectual habits, he is satisfied at first with the *opus operatum*, knowing that, from the constitution of our nature, what, at first, is an irksome labour, becomes by habit, a source of positive pleasure. The less the power of self-direction supposed to be present in the pupil, the more are external enactments multiplied, so as to hem him in on every side, to leave as little as possible to his own discretion, and so to supply as far as it is possible to do so, the lack of fixed internal principles. At this stage of his moral progress, the pupil is kept in the path of duty by an outwardly coercive law, or is under a legal system.

It is obviously accordant with the character of such a system that it should appeal to the baser, rather than to the more elevated, motives of our nature; that fear, rather than love, should constitute its constraining power. The will of the legislator, and that of those for whom he legislates, not being presumed to be in unison, or only imperfectly so, obedience must be secured by working on the passions of fear and self-interest: immediate temporal consequences must be annexed to the fulfilment or the transgression of the law. Political laws are seldom, if ever, accompanied with the sanction of reward; but in those cases in which the result sought to be attained is of a more refined nature, as, in the process of education, it is found advantageous to furnish incitements to the generous emotions, though the system can never quite dispense with those of an opposite character.

If the reader carefully examines both the structure of the Mosaic system itself and the statements of the New Testament writers respecting it, he will find that it was, in all its parts, constructed on the principles just described.

* Οὔτ' ἄρα φύσει οὔτε παρὰ φύσιν ἐγγίνονται αἱ ἀρεταί, ἀλλὰ πεφυκόσι μὲν ἡμῖν δέξασθαι αὐτὰς, τελειουμένοις δὲ διὰ τοῦ ἔθους. Ethic. Nic. l. 2. c. 1.

The economy under which the Jews were placed, was a visible, external, Theocracy. When God took the people into covenant with Himself, He became their God not only in a religious, but in a national, sense: He became their tutelary God, and their king. He constituted Himself the supreme civil magistrate of the nation, and not only delivered to it the law by which it was to be ruled, but charged Himself with the administration of that law. Hence, the system presented an example of a perfect fusion of civil and religious polity. The same lawgiver framed both the civil and the religious enactments: the same volume of inspiration which instructed the Jew in his duty towards God, contained also the charter of his national privileges. The religion of the Jew was not only a religious but a national sentiment; it was loyalty as well as religion. To worship other gods besides Jehovah, was not only a sin, but a crime; a crime *læsæ majestatis*, or of a treasonable character, and, as such, justly punishable with death. Warburton has pointed out the necessity of a Theocracy of this kind, if idolatry, which otherwise does not fall under the cognizance of political laws, was to be suppressed by temporal penalties;* but it may be further observed, that, under such a system, religion must descend, more or less, from its spiritual and internal character, and present itself in the shape of positive enactments, prescribing a certain course of external action. When God condescended to become both the civil and the religious legislator of the Jews, the religious portion of the law was compelled to assimilate itself, to a great extent, to the civil, so as to be capable of amalgamation with it, and with it to form one homogeneous whole; otherwise, the two could not have been well combined. No sooner does religion, as in Christianity, become enthroned in her proper seat, the conscience, and assert her claims to govern the inner man as well as the outward; no sooner does she present herself as a system of "spirit" and of "truth;" than she rises above the sphere of law, and, as is now at length understood, cannot be made the subject of legal enactment.

* Divine Legation, book v. s. 2. It may be remarked that the peculiarity above alluded to of the Jewish polity takes from us the power of arguing from it to the duty of the Christian magistrate in matters of religion. The Jewish polity stands alone in the history of the world, and can have no parallel in any Christian state. It does not follow that because a Jewish king, as God's viceroy, was bound to punish idolatry, a Christian government has a right to suppress by force what it conceives to be religious error. When it can be shown that God has delivered to any Christian state a law prescribing the manner in which He is to be worshipped, and made that law *part of the civil constitution* of the state, appointing the magistrate His deputy to execute its provisions, the argument from the Jewish polity may stand; but not until then.

That the religion of the Jews, when placed under their law (and to this early period of their history we must throughout this section be understood as referring), might be susceptible of such enactment, it was, so to speak, carnalized,* or framed so as to regulate the outward, rather than the inward, man. Hence St. Paul describes the Mosaic dispensation, in its legal character, as one "of the letter," in contrast with Christianity, "the ministration of the Spirit."† Those expositors fall short of the Apostle's meaning, who represent him as affirming, merely that under the Gospel we enjoy a larger measure of the Spirit's influence than was vouchsafed under the Law; or that the ceremonial of Moses was more intricate and burdensome than that of Christ. The difference which the Apostle establishes between the two dispensations, is a difference in kind. Taken by itself, and without reference to the prophetic amplifications of it which were subsequently given, the Law was a system of categorical prohibitions and enactments, which were to be literally obeyed, and obedience to the letter of which was all that was at first required; in other words, in the Law the form predominated over the spirit. Under the Gospel, on the contrary, the spirit predominates over the letter; or general principles are furnished, to be applied to particular cases according as they arise, under the guidance of an understanding enlightened by the Spirit of God. In the one case, the object was to form principles of action; in the other, it is to direct their application.

In point of fact, if we look back to the provisions of the law when it was first promulgated, we find in them little or no reference to anything beyond the national worship of Jehovah, as the tutelary God of the nation. The proximate object of the divine law-giver, as we gather it from the book of Exodus, was the constitution of a people worshipping, amidst the surrounding abominations of polytheism, the one invisible God, according to a prescribed ceremonial. Abstinence on the part of the people, as a people, from idolatry was, in the first instance, all that was required. Hence the repeated description of the covenant of Horeb, as an engagement, on the part of the Jewish people, to renounce the idolatrous practices to which they had been accustomed in Egypt, and which they saw prevalent in the nations around them, in return for the special protection and favour of Jehovah. "Take

* "Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances" (the "elements" or "rudiments" "of the world" alluded to by St. Paul, Gal. iv. 3. Col. ii. 20.) "imposed on them until the time of reformation." Heb. ix. 10.

† Cor. iii. 6. Compare Rom. vii. 6.

heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of anything which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee;" "If there be found among you any man or woman that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, *in transgressing his covenant*, and hath gone and served other gods" &c.:*— it is in terms like these that the covenant, in its original form as it was delivered at Sinai, is constantly mentioned. Hence, too, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, contrasting the Mosaic with the Christian covenant, quotes the prophecy of Jeremiah, according to which the latter was to differ from its predecessor, as the spirit differs from the form, the inward volition from the outward letter.† We look in vain, in the first issue of the law, for any requisitions relating to an internal change of heart, or that which is comprehended in the term, personal religion. Indeed, individuals as such, are never addressed in the books of Moses: it is the nation in its corporate capacity that is exhorted and admonished. Still less are any specifically Christian sentiments — such as repentance, contrition of heart, or faith — inculcated as pleasing to God. The moral law itself appears in the shape of specific prohibitions and commands, bearing upon the external conduct, the only exception being the tenth commandment, which forbids a sin of the heart: — for it may well be questioned whether the command to have no other gods but Jehovah conveyed to the Jew of Sinai anything beyond a warning against mixing up the worship of other tutelary deities with that of his own. Apparently indifferent to the inward state of those for whom he legislated, the Divine Law-giver imposed upon them a system of positive ordinances, by which, in all the functions and relations of life, they were constrained, and habituated, to the recognition and service of Himself alone. The propensity to idolatry, which the Israelities had contracted in Egypt, was met by prohibitions enforced by immediate temporal penalties; and the corrupt will was thus brought under a yoke acknowledged, even by the pious Jew, to be difficult to bear.

Of course, the above observations apply to the form, rather than the substance, of the Mosaic law, as delivered at Sinai. The substance of the moral law is the same in every age: and in every age has comprised the requirements of inward purity, and substantial moral duty. Of these no religious system, which had the

* Deut. iv. 23. and xvii. 2, 3. † Heb. viii. 8 — 10.

true God for its author, could be destitute. There can be no doubt, therefore, that, even in its first promulgation, the law implicitly enjoined that spiritual service of the heart which the Jew was subsequently explicitly commanded to render. But this was an extension of its meaning reserved for future revelations: it did not appear in the original form. The commands of the law meant more than met the ear of the Jew who had come up from Egypt: they involved the whole of his duty towards God and towards man. But to draw out the full import of the command, to declare its comprehensiveness, and its spirituality, was the province of subsequent prophecy; and we are now speaking, not of what the law became in the hands of the prophets, Moses included, but of what it was in itself when first given. Just as the subsequent revelations concerning the Messiah were but the full expansion of the first prophecy delivered to Adam, and yet that prophecy in itself conveyed to those to whom it was addressed little beyond a vague hope of deliverance from the consequences of sin; so the law delivered at Sinai was rich in hidden meaning, and virtually comprised all that was ever required of the Jew, but the full import of it was disclosed, not at once, but gradually, according as God saw that his people were able to bear it.

There is a passage of St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, the consideration of which will materially assist us in forming a true apprehension of the nature of the Mosaic law. Contending against those who taught that justification was to be attained, partly by the works of the law and partly by faith in Christ, he presses them with the argument that Abraham, the progenitor of the Jews, was himself justified by faith, his faith attaching itself to the *promise* of God, freely given, that in him should all nations of the earth be blessed. The promise to the patriarch was not made dependent upon obedience to the moral law, or indeed to any law; he received it simply as a believer; and St. Paul's argument is, that "the covenant, that was" thus "confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after," could not "disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." "Wherefore then," it might be asked, "serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made."* It was a temporary disposition of God, interposed between the Abrahamitic covenant and its fulfilment in Christ; among other reasons, "be-

* Gal. iii. 19.

cause of transgressions," or in order to restrain the visible outbreaks of sin, particularly the sin of idolatry, which otherwise would have desolated the whole face of the world, and left no room for the growth of true piety. Not, of course, that this was the only purpose of the law, but it was one of the purposes of it. In order to effect it, it was manifestly necessary that it should be imposed upon the Jews, not as individuals, but as a nation, as a civil code under which they were nationally to exist. It is only in a politically-organised society that the visible manifestations of sin can be made the subject of restraining laws. But the law, thus given, was never intended to interfere with the covenant made with Abraham, for this covenant was made with the patriarch, not as the representative of the visible, but of the spiritual Israel, or of the former only so far as it coincided with the latter; and therefore, as St. Paul argues, it appertains equally to all, Gentiles as well as Jews, who, by their faith, prove themselves to be the spiritual descendants of Abraham.* The promise was made to Abraham as an individual believer, and, through him, to every individual, whether Jew or Gentile, who should follow his faith. The law was framed for the Jews, as a nation, and embraced, in its regards, both those who had, and those who had not, the faith of Abraham; operating, in the case of the former, as a preparatory discipline, in the case of the latter, as a curb upon the rebellious will, and felt by both to be a yoke of bondage. In this point of view the law bore the same relation to the spiritual Judaism which was afterwards to merge in the Christian Church, which the casket does to the jewel which it incloses, or an external fence to the garden which it shelters. In itself it was incapable of giving life: it afforded no nutriment to faith except so far as its ritual and sacrifices raised an expectation of better things to come: but it was valuable as an outward fence against the encroachments of heathenism, as a shelter beneath which the tender blossoms of religion might flourish and expand. The law, in fact, was intended to protect the Christianity of the Old Testament, until, in Christ and through the outpouring of the spirit of Christ, the latter should attain a strength and maturity which would enable it to stand alone.

That a dispensation, constructed on this principle, and for such objects, should work chiefly by the agency of fear, or, in the language of the inspired writers, "gender to bondage," is only what

* Gal. iii. 7.

might have been expected. In such expressions of St. Paul as that just mentioned, allusion is made not merely to the fact that the law, by requiring more than could be performed by fallen man, brought guilt upon the conscience, but to the circumstances under which it was given, and the general character of the Divine lawgiver's administration of it; both of which were calculated to strike terror into those who were placed under its discipline. The manner of its promulgation at Sinai, the "blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words,"* was intended to, and did in fact, produce in the minds of a people like the early Jews, gross and carnal in their notions of Deity, a lively impression of the power and majesty of Jehovah, and a servile fear of offending Him. And throughout the dispensation, especially the earlier part of it, when the theocracy was exercised more visibly and immediately than at a later period, it was the sterner side of the divine attributes which appeared most prominently. In executing the sanctions of His law, God exhibited Himself to the Jew as a consuming fire. To the effectual administering of such a system as that of Moses such a display of the divine character was necessary. A stiff-necked people was to be disciplined to the yoke of ordinances to which they had been unaccustomed, and some of which contravened their favourite propensities; they were to be placed under an external rule of conduct which, at the time when it was imposed, must have been extremely distasteful to them; and nothing, under such circumstances, would have sufficed to secure their submission but a strong conviction of the lawgiver's power, and determination, to punish disobedience. This conviction was wrought into their minds, not only by the awful sights which they witnessed in Egypt and at Sinai, but by visible proofs, exhibited from time to time, of God's promptitude to notice, and avenge, transgressions of His law. Hence such occurrences as the slaughter of 3000 men for the idolatry of the golden calf, and of a still greater number for looking into the ark; the destruction of "Korah and his company," for invading the priest's office, and the plague which ensued; and the various temporal chastisements inflicted upon the people for their sins, both during their passage through the wilderness and after they were settled in Canaan. The Israelites knew Jehovah chiefly as the righteous administrator of the law which He had given them; jealous of His honour, and quick to

* Heb. xii. 18, 19.

resent injurious assaults upon it; "showing mercy" indeed "to thousands of them that" should keep His commandments, but "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." Every religious system which is intended to operate from without inwards, or by means of discipline, must be satisfied at first with a constrained obedience.

Not that this was the only aspect in which the Divine character was presented to the Jewish people. Whenever Jehovah laid aside the character of the tutelary god, and civil governor, of the Jews, and appeared as the God of the universe, His gracious attributes were unfolded, to sustain and encourage the penitent.* Thus, when Moses went up a second time to the Mount, to have the law reinscribed upon new tables of stone, God revealed himself as "the Lord, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin."† But the time chosen for this remarkable revelation is worthy of observation. It was not given at the original promulgation of the law, nor until the determination of the lawgiver to uphold its authority had been signally exhibited in the destruction of the worshippers of the golden calf. When the law was about to be reissued, and the covenant renewed, it was suitable that the terror-stricken people should be sustained by the assurance that mercy and grace, as well as justice and holiness, were essential attributes of Him who was their King. Here, as throughout the Old Testament, it was by the transgression of the law, not in the promulgation of it, that a disclosure of the Divine goodness and mercy was elicited: nor was it the law that gave hope of pardon to the penitent, but, as throughout, the distinct revelation of prophecy, delivered, in this instance, by the mouth of Moses, the great prophet, as well as lawgiver, of the Jewish people.‡

The dealing of God, in his capacity of civil governor, with His ancient people, which possibly, on account of the disproportion it sometimes appears to exhibit between a sin and its punishment, may wear a strange aspect in the eyes of the Christian believer, becomes intelligible when we recall to mind the distinctive prin-

* See Warburton, D. L., b. v. s. 2. † Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

‡ Calvin well remarks: "Lex misericordiæ promissiones passim continet: sed quia sunt aliunde ascitæ, non veniunt in legis rationem quum de pura ejus natura sermo habetur. Hoc illi tantum tribuunt, ut præcipiat quæ recta sunt, sceleră prohibeat, præmium edicat cultoribus justitiæ, pœnam transgressoribus minetur: cordis interim pravitatem, quæ cunctis hominibus naturalis inest, non immutet aut emendet." — Instit. lib. ii. c. 11. s. 7.

ciple upon which the elder economy was founded. Law, as an external rule not yet written upon the heart, places a curb upon the ebullitions of a sinful nature, without professing, or attempting, to rectify the nature itself: it restrains without renewing. Fear, therefore, being the moral engine by which it operates, a dread of the consequences of transgression must, cost what it will to enforce the lesson, be produced; and we may be sure that nothing short of those terrible visitations, which abound in the earlier part of the Jewish annals, would have sufficed to impress upon that wayward people the necessity of implicit submission to the appointments of God, even those of them which seemed the most arbitrary and positive. On the other hand, it was inevitable that the type of religious sentiment produced by such a discipline should partake, more or less, of a servile character; such, in fact, as, in contrast with the spirit of Christian piety, it is described by the inspired writers to have been. "The heir, as long as he" was "a child," differed "nothing from a servant, though he" was "Lord of all."

With the fundamental idea of such an economy, it was quite in keeping that a visible symbol of the divine presence should be specially connected with a certain locality; that a human priesthood should be appointed to mediate between God and His people; that that priesthood should be confined to a particular tribe and family, and follow the course of natural descent, irrespectively of moral qualifications; that outward lustrations, and "the blood of calves and goats," should suffice to cleanse from legal defilement; that particular sacrifices should be appropriated to particular transgressions; and that there should be an excessive minuteness, and elaboration of detail, in all parts of the national worship. The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us that the Jewish priesthood and ceremonial law had a special office of its own to fulfil, — viz. to enforce the great truth, that fallen man cannot, save through a mediator, approach the divine presence, and to habituate the Jewish mind to the ideas of sacrifice, atonement, and purification: but, independently of these, its typical purposes, the Levitical ritual was in perfect harmony with a legal system of religion. Under such a system, the forms of religion are of paramount importance, for it is by these forms that the inner spirit is to be called into existence. What the Word and the Sacraments are to the Christian, the Law was to the pious Jew, — viz. the instrument of the Holy Spirit in producing certain inward habits of mind. Instead, therefore, of the ritual and polity being the manifestation of the inner life, they were to be the means of creating, and cherishing, that life; instead

of taking their colour from, they were intended to give colour to, the religious sentiment within: and to enable them to effect this object, it behoved them to be rigidly defined, to abound in ceremony and to appeal largely to sense. Under such a system, the object is, to hold human nature in a fixed mould of religious discipline until it has received the desired impression, and imbibed the spirit, which lies latent, or imprisoned, in the form: the mould therefore must be of inflexible material, and elaborate finish; and must press from without upon all parts of the religious life, prescribing every function of it, and regulating every detail of holy service. Where the inner sentiment is presumed to be in a state of childish immaturity, no other course is open to the founder of a religious system than to endeavour to supply its place by the multiplication of forms: thus he gains at least an external hold upon human nature; he secures *a fact* of religious worship to begin with, by means of which (if he has ulterior views of such a nature) he may prepare the way for the introduction of a more spiritual system. Hence it is that the same characteristics (as regards the points above mentioned) which the Levitical worship presents, are found in most of the systems of Paganism which have exercised a lasting sway over mankind; such, for example, as the Brahminical system of India. The constructors of these systems, feeling that they must work upon man, if at all, from without inwards, delivered the external framework of the religion, finished in all its parts, and fixed by law: aiming, by means of varied and multiplied observances, and an imposing ceremonial, at the gradual formation of the type of religious sentiment, whatever it might be, which it was their object to create.

Finally, with a correspondence of proportion which at once approves itself to the reflecting mind, the sanctions of the Mosaic Covenant were exclusively temporal: the rewards and punishments annexed to obedience and disobedience, respectively, took their range within the present life. Indeed, the whole religious life of the Jew was one of sight, not of faith; in which point that of the Christian presents a strong contrast with it. Visible manifestations of the Divine presence, a local sanctuary, a histrionic worship, and present retribution;—these external aids to piety were vouchsafed to the Jew, because in his case the eye of faith was too feeble to bear a stronger light. But more particularly:—a law which appeals only to a future state of reward and punishment will never be obeyed, for upon the mass of men considerations of this kind exercise but a feeble influence. Hence the law

of Moses was enforced by temporal sanctions, and by them only. The tendency, natural to a Christian, to introduce more of Christianity, its doctrines and its sanctions, into the Old Testament than can be fairly inferred from the declarations of the latter, has operated to induce the belief that a doctrine without which Christianity would be a shadow, must have formed part of the earlier revelation; but, in point of fact, not a hint is dropped, in the promulgation of the law, of a future state of retribution, indeed of a future state at all; nor can any passage be adduced from the Pentateuch, in which explicit mention is made of such a state. True it is that the "old fathers" did not look only for transitory promises, as it is also true that "both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ:" but, just as the great truths connected with Christ's atonement were not declared by the law, save in the way of type and figure not at the time understood, so the expectations which the "old fathers" cherished of a future state of bliss were derived not from any puplic revelation, but either, as in the case of Abraham, from special intimations given to individuals, or from primitive tradition, or from such hints upon the subject as were dropped in the Pentateuch, and, still more abundantly, in subsequent prophecy. And, after all, it was but a hope which such expressions were calculated to raise; knowledge they could not impart. Some of them indeed needed the aid of the Christian revelation to unfold their meaning, and were probably, until that revelation was given, unintelligible.* In short, there is no evidence to prove that the doctrine of a future state formed a part even of the popular belief until a period of Jewish history considerably later.

It is well known that this omission in the law of Moses has been by the infidel laid hold of as an argument against the divine origin of that law; while by the Christian apologist an exactly opposite use has been made of it. And, in truth, if the law had been intended to give life, — if it had had an immediate connexion with salvation, — the omission might appear strange. Not so, however,

* For example, the famous passage, Exod. iii. 6. "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." To us, who enjoy the benefit of our Lord's exposition of this passage (Matt. xxii. 32.) it seems to involve very clearly the doctrine of a future state; but the question is, was the truth contained in it seen before He brought it to light; and especially when Moses first delivered the law? It may have constituted one ground, among others, of a pious surmise; but more that this we cannot affirm. From the words of St. Matthew which follow, — viz. that "when the multitude heard it, they were astonished at his doctrine," it would rather seem that our Lord's exposition of it was new to them. See Mr. Davison's remarks on the passage, Discourses on Prophecy, p. 126. 3rd edit.

if the primary object of it was to afford a temporary shelter to religion, and to prepare the chosen people for the reception of that better covenant which was to bring life and immortality to light.

Such was the nature, and such some of the leading features, of the Mosaic economy. If it should appear strange that a system, so rudimental in its general characteristics, and so manifestly inadequate to express the true relation existing between man and his Maker, should have emanated from a Divine source, we have only to recollect the spiritual condition of the Jewish people at the time when it was imposed upon them. At the period of their departure from Egypt, the Israelites were a people of such rude conceptions, as regards religion, as to render them incapable of a more spiritual system than that which they received. The idolatrous practices of Egypt had acquired so firm a hold upon their minds that it took centuries of discipline, and the temporary dissolution of the whole polity, to purge out the taint. Their notions, therefore, of the Divine nature and attributes had become, to the last degree, childish and corrupt, and their moral sentiments proportionably perverted; for conscience, unless it be vivified with just views of the power and holiness of God, offers but a feeble resistance to passion, and soon learns to call evil good and good evil: idolatry and a vitiated standard of morals are always found to go together. Both as regards religious knowledge, therefore, and moral sentiment, the Jews, at the time when they were placed under their law, were in such a low condition that no other system could have produced any impression upon them; unless, indeed, it had pleased God to deviate from the ordinary course of His spiritual dispensations, by dissipating miraculously, and instantaneously, the clouds of spiritual darkness in which, with the rest of the world, they were at that time involved. If even after centuries of training under his law, the Jewish believer was, as St. Paul declares, a child, not yet emancipated from the restraints of discipline, we can well conceive that when he was led forth by Moses from Egypt, he needed to be dealt with as an infant in religion. And as such he was treated. Fenced round on every side against the encroachments of heathenism, he was taught the elements (στοιχεια) of piety by such means as were suited to his infantile capacity; by type and symbol, and, as he was able to receive it, by the "line upon line" of prophecy. Meanwhile the Theocracy, with its temporal sanctions, never released its hold upon him; jealously guarding its pupil until the time should come for resigning him to a more efficient Teacher. Nothing more than a consideration of the state of the world, even in its more civilised

portions, at that early period, is needed to account for the elementary character of the elder dispensation. To have promulgated Christianity among a people of such gross conceptions as the inspired history shows the Israelites to have been in the time of Moses, would have been as unsuitable as it would be to plant the English constitution in all its integrity among the rude inhabitants of some recently discovered island of the Pacific ocean.

The moral and intellectual condition of the first Israelites may also, perhaps, serve to account for the length of time which was permitted to elapse between the promulgation of the law and the coming of Christ; and which, unless we take this consideration into account, may seem unaccountably protracted. In fact, nothing is of slower growth than national sentiment, either in political matters or in religion. What a length of time have some of the most admired structures of modern civilisation taken to arrive at their present maturity! It has required the schooling of centuries to teach the lessons of political wisdom, and to imbue the nation with the spirit of the constitution under which it is to live. But in time the lesson is learned. The errors of one generation are perceived, and corrected, by that which succeeds; the past supplies warnings for the future; occasional jarrings in the several parts of the body politic lead to a more skilful adjustment of them; and eventually, by slow degrees, an objective type of national feeling is formed. So it is in morals, and in religion. Slavery is now almost universally reprobated by Christian nations; but what a length of time elapsed before the spirit of Christianity achieved this victory over the corrupt passions of human nature. Of still more recent growth is the recognition, now become pretty general, of the purely spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, and the consequent unlawfulness of attempting to establish it by other methods than those of persuasion and argument. The Christians of a future generation will wonder how their ancestors could have so far mistaken the spirit of the Gospel as to employ pains and penalties as instruments of conversion; yet toleration is one of the very latest fruits of the progress of religious illumination. So slow is the process by which great truths, rejected perhaps and derided at their first promulgation, win their way in spite of opposition, and gradually interpenetrate the whole mass of society. When we contrast the degree of culture which existed in the Hebrew nation, when first placed under its law,* with that to which it was necessary it

* For a fuller view of the nature of the Mosaic Economy, See the Author's Bampton Lectures.

should be brought, in order to be prepared for the Gospel revelation, we shall perhaps no longer consider it strange that many centuries had to elapse before the preparatory discipline could effect its purpose.

If the nature of the elder economy has been dwelt upon at greater length than its relation to the subject of these pages would seem to warrant, it has been not merely on account of the intrinsic interest attaching to the first covenant under which God placed his people, but because a true insight into the structure of the Mosaic system is nothing less than a true insight into the leading ideas which lie at the root of the Romish conception of the Church of Christ. Every student of the principal writers of the Romish communion must have observed that, in arguing in favour of the system of their Church, the analogy furnished by the Mosaic dispensation is, as far as Scripture is concerned, the stronghold to which they constantly resort. That Christ is a lawgiver in the same sense in which Moses was * and the Gospel a new law, presenting, in a spiritualised form, the same features which the old did;—these are the two main pillars on which the Tridentine edifice rests. It would be easy to show that the introduction of this mode of reasoning was the first symptom by which the early Church betrayed its commencing decline from Apostolic Christianity, and its entrance upon that downward course which finally issued in the Papacy of the middle ages. This is perceptible, not merely in the universal transmutation of the Christian ministry into a sacrificing priesthood, but in the general aspect which, in the pages of the early Latin fathers, the Church begins to assume, as a system of Law; that is, of positive ordinances, pretending to a Divine origin, and intended to operate upon man from without inwards. And it is a significant fact, that as Nitzsch, in his reply to Moehler, has pointed out,† the productions in which this view of the Church is most strongly presented are, the *spurious* writings of the second and third centuries; such, for example, as the pretended Apostolical Constitutions.

"The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ:"‡ how is it that the Church of Rome expounds the opposition here intimated? It is admitted, indeed, that the Law was introductory to the Gospel, and that in several important

* "Si quis dixerit Jesum Christum a Deo hominibus datum fuisse ut redemptorem cui fidant, non etiam ut *legislatorem* cui obediant; anathema sit."—Conc. Trid. Sess. 6. Can. 21.

† Protestantische Beantwortung der Symbolik Moehler's, p. 209.

‡ John, i. 17.

points the latter differs from the former. A new dispensation was introduced by Christ, of which the preceding one contained but the outline; the one was local, the other is universal; the one transitory, the other to last to the end of time;—by the acknowledgment of such points of distinction as these, the observation of the Apostle is, it is conceived, sufficiently explained. Meanwhile, no difference *in kind* is admitted to exist between the two dispensations. So far from this, the Gospel, we are told, is a new law, presenting, not merely the substance of which Judaism contained the shadow, but an exact counterpart of the features of the ancient system; so that, instead of the temple at Jerusalem, to which the Jews, wherever they might be, looked as the central seat of their religion, we have now the Apostolical chair at Rome, the centre of Unity to all Christians; instead of priests by natural, we have priests by spiritual, descent; an unbloody sacrifice takes the place of the "blood of calves and goats;" a graduated hierarchy succeeds to the threefold order of the ancient ministers of the altar; and we have a liturgical ceremonial which, it is avowed, finds its "parallel in the worship and ceremonies of the old law, ordained by God himself." *

It is in the Romish theory of sanctification, philosophically considered, that the identity of principle between the Law and the Tridentine version of the Gospel becomes chiefly apparent. Every one acquainted with that theory knows that its ethical basis is the Aristotelian doctrine of habits, applied to Christianity. The philosopher tells us, and tells us truly, that moral habits are formed by repeated acts,† the mere rudiment of the habit being that which is implanted by nature: if for moral we substitute spiritual habits, and for the rudiments of natural virtue, a power of doing holy actions, imparted to all in baptism, we have here the Romish doctrine of sanctification in its ultimate form. By acting out the holy nature supposed to be at the baptismal font communicated in germ, whether in the way of good deeds or of bodily mortifications, the Christian grows in grace, and is gradually disciplined into the image of Christ: obedience, at first painful, becomes by degrees habitual, and at last pleasant. Thus men are now, as of old, schooled into religion from without inwards. And the Church is the great institution of discipline in which the work is carried on. The Church, by her prescriptions and ordinances, operates upon

* Milner's End of Controversy. Letter 20.

† Οὕτω δὲ καὶ τὰ μὲν δίκαια πράττοντες δίκαιοι γινόμεθα, τὰ δὲ σώφρονα σώφρονες, τὰ δ'ἀνδρεῖα ἀνδρεῖοι. —Ethic. Nic. l. ii. c. 1.

the undisciplined will of man, and brings it into subjection to Christ. In one point, however, there is a wide difference between the system of discipline under which God placed the Jews, and that to which Christians are subjected; a difference which makes the latter a yoke far heavier than that which preceded it. Burdensome as the Jewish ritual was, it was, once for all, distinctly laid down in the written books of the law, which lay open to all, and from the precepts of which the priesthood was not permitted, in the smallest particular, to deviate: a regulation which effectually nipped the growth of sacerdotal usurpation over the consciences of men. Whereas, under the new law, the discipline by which men are to be made Christians is administered, not according to a well-defined prescription emanating from God himself, but according to the varying will of man; the Christian priesthood, represented in the Pope, possessing a right divine to add to the existing law whatever regulations may seem to them proper.

To those acquainted with the natural affinities existing between systems it will be no matter of surprise that, in the point last mentioned, an identity of sentiment should appear between the theory of Rome and that of the Church system as recently revived amongst ourselves: that by a writer of the latter school, the Church should be described as an institution which "not only forms by an outward and political coercion the exterior course of obedience, but shapes by a lighter and unerring hand the full lineaments of Christ's image. Its correction reaches the unwritten moralities: it enters into the inner heart of man; it forbids unforgiving thoughts; it commands a man to render good for evil, blessing for cursing; it obliges him to love God and man, and rebukes him if he disobey." (It has been usually supposed that these are the commands of Christ himself. But not to dwell upon this, it may be remarked that the passage contains, in short compass, the natural history of the Confessional.) "By her authority," we are told, "as God's vicar upon earth, she subjugates the whole energy of man which struggles against the will of God. By her inward discipline she checks, and, through grace, subdues to the conscience the aggressive and importunate affections of our nature." "Through the one objective discipline, the will is once more enthroned supreme, and its energies united with the will of God. Obedience passes, by little and little, from deliberation and conscious effort, to a ready and almost unconscious volition." "We are placed, as it were, under the discipline of childhood;" *i. e.*, under an outwardly coercive law, like the Jew of old. And

since to a law, if it is not to be a dead letter, there must be added a living authority to execute its provisions, we are further informed that, under the new Christian law, such an authority has been actually established, — viz. the clerical order, — which now stands to the Christian people in the same relation in which God himself did to the Jews; "God having constituted an order which shall bear rule over his people, and shall bring them under the yoke of obedience to himself." * A sentiment which the Romish Catechism expresses more succinctly when it tells us, that obedience to the Church (by the Church being meant, as usual, the Clergy) is one of the chief duties of a Christian man.†

It is, in fact, this false view of the Church, according to which it is, not a community of those who are Christians, but an institution to make men so, that identifies the Church system, fundamentally, with that of Rome, leading both the one and the other to transform the Gospel into a spiritualised Judaism. For, as is evident, on this supposition the external polity of the Church becomes that in which its true being lies; it becomes, what the Jewish law was, the divinely-appointed instrument of the Holy Spirit in working upon the spirit of man, by holding, as the system of Moses did, human nature in a fixed inflexible mould. On this hypothesis, too, an alteration of the exterior framework of the Christian polity is necessarily regarded as equivalent to the destruction of the spirit within; for such, in fact, would have been the effect of a similar alteration in the case of the elder economy.

This is not the place for the inquiry, how far some particles of truth may be contained in the above representations of the functions of the Church. There is no doubt a sense in which, even now, the Christian society is a school of discipline to its members. It is especially so to the children and young persons within its pale, whose condition, therefore, so far approximates to that of the Jew under the Mosaic law. Even towards its adult members, especially those of them who are not yet fully under the influence of divine grace, the Church—*i. e.* the Christian community—stands in the relation of a school of education operating from without inwards. But the difference is this: — the Church, so far as it is a school of discipline, a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ, operates not, as the Mosaic system did, by means of *law*, by positive ordi-

* Manning, Unity of the Church, pp. 230. 251. 254.

† "Hæc autem ecclesia nota est. . . . Nam cum illi ab omnibus parendum sit, cognoscatur necesse est." — C. x. s. 11.

nances and outward prescriptions, but by what is comprised in the expression, Christian influences, — *i. e.* the teaching, the life, the example, the spirit, the general standard of practice of those who compose the Christian community. There is all the difference in the world between a system of influences of this kind and a system of law. The latter is artificial and arbitrary, the former is natural, as being the spontaneous result of the new creation in Christ: the latter is fixed, rigid, and unbending; the former is plastic, and variable, operating invisibly and insensibly upon those subjected to it. It is only in this sense that the Church can be called a school of discipline, and in this sense it is so; not, however, any particular order in the Church, but the whole society itself. According to the other view, which regards the Church as an institution of legal discipline, the Saviour's prayer, "Sanctify them through thy Truth, thy Word is Truth," loses all its import. Not faith, but, as of old, the law, purifies the heart; and, as in the matter of justification, the Church, not Christ, is made the mediator between man and God, so in the matter of sanctification, the Church — *i. e.* its external system, — not the Word through the Spirit, becomes the instrument of the Christian's transformation into the image of Christ.

Section II.

THE SPIRITUAL OPERATION OF THE MOSAIC LAW.

When the Romanist presents us with a conception of the Church which makes the latter essentially one with the religious polity under which the Jew was placed, the question at once occurs, Has there been no progression in the course of God's dispensations towards our fallen race; no gradual unfolding of the scheme of revelation; no advance from an elementary to a more mature stage of religious knowledge and experience? Did Christ, when He came, find the pious Jew no further advanced towards just views of religion than his ancestors were at Sinai, and therefore needing, like them, in common with his Gentile believing brethren, to be placed under a new law, which, like the old, and in the same sense, should operate from without inwards? In the following

observations, the natural effect of the Mosaic law, when it met with a pious and reflecting temper of mind, will form the subject of consideration. We have seen how it operated as regards the nation at large, raising up a fence between it and heathenism, under cover of which the true Israel might be nursed into a state of preparedness for Christ: we have now to consider what its effect must have been upon the pious part of the Jewish people, the spiritual seed of Abraham, which eventually was to form the nucleus of the Christian Church.

The fact is that, as Nitzsch observes in his answer to Moehler,* the law must, in the case of the pious Jew, have tended, by a natural and inevitable process, to its own dissolution as a system of outward prescriptions, and to the substitution of an inward and spiritual, for an outward and formal, worship of God. Even during its continuance, the letter must have become antiquated in favour of the spirit, and the pious Jew could not long have remained a legalist.

"The law was our schoolmaster,"—a system of educational discipline,—"to bring us to Christ." This it was on account both of the elementary knowledge of the Christian scheme which it imparted and of the moral dispositions which it produced in those cases in which it met with a personal sense of religion.

And first, as regards knowledge. The law, in its priesthood, ritual, and worship, contained a shadow, or faint adumbration, of the verities of the Gospel: it is reasonable, then, to suppose that, though but "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things," it conveyed to the pious Jew a measure of information concerning them, and led his mind beyond its own ritual enactments. How far this information may have extended, is one of the most obscure and doubtful questions in the whole compass of theology. The remark has already been made that it is extremely difficult for the Christian, possessing as he does the key to the Levitical ritual, to realise the position of those who, living under it, were destitute of this advantage; the consequence of which has been a tendency to attribute to the Jewish believer a more accurate acquaintance with the specific doctrines of the Gospel than there is reason to believe he actually possessed. So far as we have means of judging, it should seem that the specific references to the Gospel which the Ceremonial Law contained were, during the existence of the Jewish economy, imperfectly, if

* Prot. Beant. &c., p. 195.

at all, understood, and that the Levitical types and sacrifices were much more a prophecy than an explanation of what was to come. The great fact to be here considered is, that neither at the time when the Ceremonial Law was given, nor subsequently, was any recorded disclosure made of its ulterior signification. Unless, then, we conceive that an esoteric doctrine upon this point, not found in the Old Testament, was delivered to Moses, and by him handed down to future generations, we must admit that the types were to the ancient believer a system of ciphers, the interpretation of which it needed the Gospel to make known. Moreover, it must be recollected that, if the Hebrew worshipper had really been acquainted with the latent meaning of the types, the law could in no proper sense have been called a schoolmaster to bring him to a knowledge which he already possessed.

It would be, however, an error in the opposite extreme to maintain that the ceremonial law afforded no assistance towards a perception of the great doctrines of the Gospel. The effect of it must have been to habituate the mind of the Jew, not so much to any specific doctrine of the atonement, as to the general notion of atonement by means of sacrifice, and the necessity of purity in those who would approach God. The idea also of mediatorship between man and God, on which the Christian scheme rests, must have been created, or cherished, by the appointment of the Levitical Priesthood. In short, the notions expressed by the words expiation, atonement, priesthood, purification, and the like, were rendered so familiar to the Jew, that when the great doctrine with which they are connected was offered to his acceptance, he had only to transfer to a new object the old elements of his religious life, exchanging at the same time the shadow for the substance. And just in proportion as it produced this effect, would the insufficiency of the legal sacrifices and lustrations become more clearly understood. That they were intrinsically worthless,—that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins;"—this must have become evident to the Jew as he advanced in spiritual discernment: and the more this feeling prevailed, the more would he turn away from the symbolical system by which he was surrounded, and feed in faith upon the idea which it suggested, the hope which it raised, of some better sacrifice to come, which should really take away the guilt of sin. In this way, the very ideas which the ceremonial law prompted must have operated to the depreciation of that law in the mind of the devout worshipper.

But the law, as has been remarked, was intended, not only to symbolize the truths of Christianity, but to be a preparatory discipline, by means of which such a disposition of spirit should be produced in those placed under it, as should lead to a cordial reception of the Gospel whenever it should be proposed to their acceptance. This is the second aspect under which we are to consider its operation upon the piously inclined Jew.

The inspired writings of the Old Testament contained the basis of historical evidence upon which Christ's mission was to rest: one chief object, as has been remarked, of the selection of the Jewish people, being the safe custody of those oracles of God in which the leading particulars of the Messiah's descent, of the manner of His appearance, of the miracles He was to perform, and of the moral features of His doctrine, were recorded, for the instruction of the devout expectants of "the consolation of Israel;" so that when the latter should appear, He might be at once recognised as He "of whom Moses and the prophets did write." Our Lord expressly referred to this sort of evidence as satisfactory to all candid inquirers. But this was not enough. There needed not only a body of external proof which should convince the inquiring Jew that Jesus was indeed the Christ; but a preparation of the heart which should predispose him to accept the Christian faith when proposed to him. It is a matter of common remark, and was signally exemplified in the great mass of the Jewish people, that a wrong state of the heart impedes the due exercise of the understanding, and that the clearest evidence often fails of producing conviction, simply because the truths which it establishes jar with the moral habits of the inquirer. It was necessary, therefore, that provision should be made for forming in the serious Jew such moral dispositions as should prepare him for the Gospel, and render it an easy act of transition for the "Israelite indeed, and without guile," to become a devout Christian.

With a view to this end a singular provision was made, which distinguishes the Mosaic law from all other civil codes, — viz. the incorporation in it of the immutable moral law of God, which, from the first, though not so distinctly as afterwards, enjoined the great moral duties of love to God and to man, and required purity of the heart. No human laws have ever attempted to prescribe these duties; and, unless we bear in mind the peculiar character of the Jewish economy, we shall be tempted to think them out of place in a national code of legislation. Religion, as well as civil

government, was the object which the Divine Legislator of the Jews had in view; and the latter was throughout framed with a reference, and in subordination, to the former. Hence the moral law, the proper province of which is the interior obedience of the heart, formed part of the national constitution; and this, as St. Paul tells us, for the special purpose of producing conviction of sin. "By the law is the knowledge of sin:" it reveals the condemning nature of it: it produces a sense of personal implication in it. The application of the moral law to the conscience awakens its dormant susceptibilities, irritates the evil nature within, and infuses new life into its workings (Rom. vii. 7.); but while it thus teaches man his guilt and his pollution, it opens to him no means of relief; it makes the sinner sensible of his chain, and leaves him under it. It is this conviction of sin, or deep feeling of personal demerit, which, coupled with a feeling of spiritual helplessness, constitutes the true preparation of heart for the reception of the Gospel; and accordingly, in the discipline under which the Jew was placed, provision was made, as aforesaid, for producing it. In this particular, as in others, the Jew, from his possessing "the oracles of God," enjoyed a signal advantage over the heathen. The heathen world, having no knowledge of the moral law except what might be gathered from the faint traces of it "written upon their hearts," and attested by the accusing or else excusing voice of conscience;* having no express revelation of it which they could not modify, or adulterate; fell into the natural course of lowering the requirements of the law so as to come within the capacities of fallen human nature. They proposed to themselves an ideal of holiness, not such as God requires, but such as they felt they could attain to: instead of endeavouring to raise themselves to the law, they brought the law down to their own level. Hence, in all the ancient systems of practical philosophy, whether as applied to individuals or to communities, confidence in the powers of unassisted human nature is the conspicuous and fatal defect: in truth, to reach the standard of morals which men had framed for themselves, nothing was needed but the strenuous application of the natural faculties. The Christian sentiment, which we call conviction of sin, or contrition, and which constitutes the essential point of identity between the religion of the pious Jew and that of the Christian, never appears in the pages of ancient philosophy: the philosophers did not feel that their

* Rom. ii. 16.

inward state was such as called for contrition. From this error, so destructive of all true religious sentiment, the Jew was preserved by the incorporation of the moral law, in its proper integrity, in the written code of Moses: by which means it was secured from the fluctuations of human opinion, and rendered independent of any subjective standard of moral purity. Even so, indeed, the law might be explained away, or superseded by corrupt glosses, as was actually done by the Pharisees in a later age; but it could not be obliterated from the written record: it remained there for the instruction, and conviction, of all those (and doubtless in each age they were not a few) who, under serious impressions of religion, had recourse to the Word of God, with a sincere purpose of discovering and obeying his revealed will.

It needs but a slight acquaintance with the workings of the human heart to perceive that exactly in proportion as, under the discipline of the moral law, the Jew became enlightened as to the spiritual nature of sin, the legal system of religion by which he was fenced round would sink in his estimation. For a sense of inward defilement in the sight of God necessarily gives rise to a desire for an inward cleansing, and renders the mind dissatisfied with a mere outward ceremonial. Hence may be explained most of the doctrinal differences existing between Protestants and Romanists. The semi-Pelagianism to which the theology of Trent has always inclined, has produced a corresponding tendency to dwell more upon the outward than upon the inward side of Christianity;—upon the sacraments, upon the polity of the Church, upon the intrinsic value of religious ceremonies, and upon the efficacy of particular outward acts of piety: naturally so, for the idea which is framed of the remedy will always bear a relation of proportion to the presumed nature of the disease. The decision of the Council of Trent, that "concupiscence hath" *not* "of itself the nature of sin," but is called sin by the Apostle merely because it may lead thereto,* or, in other words, that the essence of sin consists, not in the inward propension, but in the outward act; and the received doctrine of Romish theologians, that original sin consists merely in the deprivation of the gift, superadded to man's nature, of original righteousness; these dogmas sufficiently explain why all the steps of man's restoration from the effects of the fall assume in Romanism an external, rather than an internal,

* "Hanc concupiscentiam, quam aliquandoApostolus peccatum appellat, sancta synodus declarat eccles. Cath. nunquam intellexisse peccatum appellari, quod vere et proprie in sanctis peccatum sit, sed quia ex peccato est, et ad peccatum inclinat." Sess. v. s. 5.

aspect; why the Sacraments are multiplied, and in the Sacraments the *opus operatum*, or performance of the act, is regarded rather than the inward preparation of the heart. To cleanse from an external pollution an external ceremonial is very appropriately applied. Protestantism, with its deeper view of the effects of the fall and the nature of sin, adopts, as might be expected, a more inward view of the process of recovery: it teaches an inward, instead of a sacramental, method of justification (justification by faith); it subordinates the visible signs of Christianity to the internal work of the Spirit of which they are the signs. The same must have been the direction of thought in the case of the pious Jew. The clearer his insight into the spirituality of the law, and the deeper therefore his conviction of sin, the less account would he make of a ritual worship, or a legal righteousness. In proportion as the truth became more vividly felt, that God regards the state of the heart more than the outward act, the weakness and imperfection of the whole system by which he was surrounded would become apparent. Its preparatory, its symbolical, character would be a conclusion forced upon him. It offered no adequate atonement to take away the guilt, no sufficient help to destroy the power, of sin, viewed as the transgression of the moral law; and its insufficiency in these respects must have become clearly discerned. The appointments in being, "the gifts and sacrifices" of the Levitical ritual, "could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience;" and the cleansing of the conscience was that which the worshipper, with his growing spiritual perceptions, chiefly craved. The devout Jew would still scrupulously comply with the ritual forms, prescribed as they were by God Himself; but they would be more and more felt to be but carnal rudiments: inward purity, and an inward sprinkling from guilt, would come to be with him the main objects of desire. In a word, the essential elements of a Christian temper would spring up within him; and while the discipline of the law led him to desire, the announcements of prophecy gave him the sure promise of, "a better covenant," to be "established upon better promises," and by means of "better sacrifices," than those with which "the patterns of things in the heavens" were "purified."*

It is obvious that the two spheres of operation which we have above attributed to the law, would be supplementary, and a mutual aid, the one to the other. The convictions of sin, produced by the

* Heb. viii. 6; ix. 23.

high requirements of the moral law, would dispose the Jew to desire a more perfect atonement than the ceremonial law supplied; and at the same time the ceremonial law itself would give a mute promise, or raise an expectation, of some such better atonement: and thus both would combine to carry him forward from the region of symbol and outward prescription to that of a more spiritual religion.

Even then if we had no evidence of the fact, we should conclude, from a consideration of the effect of the moral and ceremonial law combined, that, in the case of the pious Jew, it must have led to an emerging from the oldness of the letter, into a sphere of religion of a more spiritual and interior character. Even the common analogies of nature would lead us to anticipate such a result. For, to return to those furnished by political systems and the work of education, both the lawgiver and the instructor have, in placing those for whom they frame enactments under an outwardly coercive system, higher ends, ulterior results, in view: the one aims at the formation of national, the other of individual, character. And the end aimed at does, in most cases, really follow. Thus the mass of floating sentiment which constitutes national character is the result of the gradual operation of the laws by which the nation is governed; though it is also true that laws are the expression of the national character. There is, in fact, a process of action and reaction constantly going on; the external enactment giving a direction to the national sentiment, and the latter again producing such enlargements, or modifications, of the enactment as circumstances may require; or sometimes even abrogating the original letter, to make way for a fitter expression of the spirit embodied in it. In like manner, in the work of education internal habits are actually produced, in all save the most untoward natures, by a judicious system of discipline: custom becomes second nature, and obedience, from being a painful effort, assumes the character of spontaneous action. Wherever men are placed under an external system, the requirements of which are in accordance with their innate moral capacities, the result, sooner or later, is the formation of an inner sentiment which, to the individual, abrogates the literal prescription, or rather the prescription in its letter. There is no reason to doubt that a somewhat similar process must, in the case of the devout Jew, have taken place. By degrees, more enlightened perceptions of religion would take the place of the rudimental ideas of an earlier age; and a mass of objective religious sentiment, true as far as it went, would establish itself in the na-

tional mind. And once the process commenced, it would continue. For religion, when, as was the case under the Mosaic dispensation, its fundamental conceptions are just and true, is essentially progressive; developing surmises into matters of belief, bringing to light views of truth before unnoticed, and handing down the stock of truth which belongs to each generation to a succeeding one, to be added to, or corrected.

But we are not, in this matter, left wholly to the conclusions of reason. One book of Scripture there is, which clearly proves the direction which the religion of the early Jews took, — the book of Psalms. These inspired compositions may, like the writings of the New Testament, be considered under a twofold aspect; they are not only a manual of divine instruction vouchsafed to the church, but records of the spiritual experience of the authors: the sacred lyrists of Israel expressed their own interior convictions, and feelings, while penning, as the instruments of the Spirit, hymns for the use of God's people in every age. The book of Psalms, therefore, presents us with an authentic picture of the religion of the pious Jew, more than a thousand years before Christ. And what is its prevailing tone? Is it a religion of ritual and ceremonial; of rigid exactness in the details of outward service; but of comparative indifference to the spirit in which that service was performed? It is needless to observe that the very opposite is its character. That the writers of the book of Psalms lived *under* the law, is easily discernible from their compositions; but it is equally evident that they were not *of* the law; that is, that they had passed out of the region of a literal symbolical worship, into that of spiritual religion. There is, throughout, a studied disparagement, not of the law itself, but of that legal spirit which made more account of the outward lustration than of the cleansing of the heart, and was satisfied with the ceremonial rites of atonement, without desiring a more efficacious propitiation. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation:" "I will praise the name of God with a song, and magnify it with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock, that hath horns and hoofs:" "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High:" — this is the general strain of the book of Psalms. That

remarkable composition, the 51st Psalm, is of itself sufficient to mark the progress which religion had made from the ceremonial system of the Pentateuch, to a religion of spirit and of truth. Indeed, when we consider the psalmist's convictions of original and actual sin; his feeling that God requires "truth in the inward parts," or purity of heart; his expectation of a more perfect atonement, of which he regarded the legal rites as but a figure; his prayer for the restoration of spiritual joy, and for the pardon of sin; and the sentiment to which he gives utterance, that the sacrifice of "a broken and contrite heart" is of more value in God's sight than all the legal offerings; we recognise in him a spirit which makes him one with us. His religion is essentially Christian, the only points of difference being, that the *objects* of faith are not as yet distinctly apprehended, and that the fair blossoms of spiritual religion are still sheltered by the outward fence of the law, lest, in their comparative immaturity, they should perish by exposure. Finally, religion, as pourtrayed in the book of Psalms, has, as compared with its aspect at an earlier period, advanced, not only in its objective views of divine truth, but in its subjective character. Instead of being national, or corporate, under which aspect it almost exclusively presents itself to us in the Pentateuch, it has become personal. The sorrows, temptations, and perplexities; the hopes and the joys of the individual believer; these, and, only in a subordinate degree, the fortunes of the nation, constitute the subject matter of the sacred songs of Israel. It is the contrast which they present in the points above mentioned to the ceremonial character of the Mosaic ordinances, that renders it so easy a matter to transfer these compositions to the uses of Christian worship, both private and public.

We conclude, then, that the law could not, in the nature of things, and in fact did not, operate towards the reproduction of itself under whatever modification of form: that, on the contrary, its inevitable tendency, in the case of the pious Jew, was to antiquate its own mutable and temporary portions, — viz. all that concerned the external worship of God, and, in place of the artificial system under which the nation as such was placed, to introduce a cast of religion in which the letter was made subordinate to the spirit. But it has been remarked in passing that prophecy came in opportunely to meet the wants and desires which the discipline of the law had called forth; and indeed it is impossible adequately to estimate the effect of the religious influences which were brought to bear upon the Jew, if we leave out of view the important part

which prophecy fulfilled, both in fixing the impressions which the law by itself had produced and in communicating information upon points which the law had passed over in silence. It is when viewed in combination with the prophetic institute that the law is most clearly seen to have been a schoolmaster to prepare men for Christ. We pass on, then, to make some remarks upon the matter and scope of the prophetic teaching of the Old Testament.

Section III.

THE PROPHETIC REVELATION.

Our Lord, adopting the current language of the age, spoke of the elder revelation under the threefold division of the law, the psalms, and the prophets;* and the distinction is, for practical purposes, convenient and intelligible. It is not, however, strictly accurate. For the Pentateuch contains not only the civil and religious polity of the Jewish people, but moral and predictive matter also, as well as some lyrical compositions; and the psalms, it is well known, are as prophetical as the writings of the prophets themselves. Indeed, nothing is more probable than that the two characters of prophet and poet were, among the Jews, as in other nations, commonly combined, and designated by the same name. The essential point of distinction lies in the form of composition: the psalms are lyrical poems intended to be set to music; whereas the prophetic writings, though often highly poetical, and even containing a few specimens of sacred song, had, in general, no such character.† In other respects, the psalmists of Israel were teachers of religion, and instruments of the Spirit in foretelling what was to come, not less than they to whom we usually appropriate the appellation of prophet; and indeed, from their being in constant use in the public devotional exercises of the temple, the

* Luke, xxiv. 44.

† Another distinction, of a personal kind, has been pointed out by Hengstenberg (Christologie, &c. Theil 1. Abt. 1. p. 201.) The psalmist might have the gift of prophetical inspiration, without being invested with the prophetical office; the donum, without the munus, propheticum. In the prophets, properly so called, both were united.

psalms must have exercised an influence in moulding the religious sentiments of the Jew, fully equal to, if not greater than, that of the compositions of the prophets.

The prophetic scriptures, strictly so called, comprise a series of revelations interposed between the Law and the Gospel, the confessed object of which was to prepare the way for the latter by unfolding, with increasing clearness as time advanced, its nature and essential principles. Prophecy, like the law, was introductory to the Gospel; but in a different way. What the law by its discipline disposed men to feel and to desire, and what it shadowed forth in type and figure, prophecy, more or less, clearly announced as actually about to come: the law set men upon a wish for a better covenant, and a better atonement; prophecy gave shape and substance to the wish, and turned it into a sure expectation: the law drove men from itself to Christ; prophecy was full of Christ: the law and the Gospel as covenants are opposed to each other; prophecy was an anticipation of the Gospel in its most distinctive doctrines: the law operated indirectly, prophecy directly, towards the introduction of the Gospel. The prophetic revelation, therefore, is of great moment in determining the view which we are to entertain of the nature of the Christian dispensation.

The subject-matter of the prophetic canon is easily perceived to be either didactic or predictive. For the scope of prophecy was very far from being confined to the mere foretelling of future events: a main part of the prophetic revelation consisted in communicating religious instruction, both moral and doctrinal; in rebuking sin, especially in high places; in urging the duty of repentance; and in ministering consolation to the true Israel of God in times of public calamity. The prophets were not only prophets in the narrower acceptation of the term, but religious teachers, and censors of public morals. The point of inquiry now before us is, whether the religious teaching of the prophets, and the notices which their predictions contain of the principal features of the Christian dispensation, are in the same direction as that which we have concluded the religious experience of the Jew to have unavoidably taken,—viz. from the external and ritual side of religion to the inward and spiritual—from the shell to the kernel; or in a contrary direction, so as to reverse the process already commenced, and bring back the Jew to the oldness of the letter. Do the prophets treat the religion of the psalms as a true or as a false "development" of the original Judaism delivered by Moses?

The most cursory glance at the scope and tendency of the prophetic teaching of the Old Testament will make it evident, that it both confirms the impressions which we have supposed to have been produced by the operation of the law, and carries the mind of the devout inquirer still further in the same direction. In the words of an eminent writer on prophecy, the moral revelation of the prophets "is a step beyond the Law, and preparatory to the Gospel. It is a step beyond the law in respect of the greater distinctness and fulness of some of its doctrines and precepts; it is a more perfect exposition of the principles of personal holiness and virtue; the sanctions of it have less of an exclusive reference to temporal promises, and incline more to evangelical; the ritual of the law begins to be discountenanced by it; the superior value of the moral commandment to be enforced: and altogether it bears a more spiritual and a more instructive character than the original law given by Moses."* To the comprehensiveness of this statement nothing can be added; but it may be useful to illustrate it by a few instances.

Perhaps no example is more striking than that furnished by the book of Deuteronomy, in which Moses appears more as a prophet than as a lawgiver. Though commonly numbered among the books of the law, this remarkable composition is, in fact, the first of the long series of moral instructions vouchsafed by God to his ancient people: it is altogether prophetical in character. And though but a short time, comparatively, had elapsed since the promulgation of the law, how great is the advance which in it religion is seen to have made. True it is that, even in Deuteronomy, religion is more national than personal: so much so, that the duty of private prayer, for example, is not once mentioned in the book. But the national religion which it inculcates is of a different complexion from that of the previous revelation. It is manifestly more moral, more inward. The spiritual service which God requires; the divine attributes of holiness and mercy; the goodness of God already exhibited towards the people; His favourable acceptance of national repentance; and, in general, the full spiritual meaning of the moral law:—upon topics like these, the book of Deuteronomy enlarges with a copiousness which strikingly distinguishes it from the first promulgation of the law.

But to pass on to the later prophets:—there is no theme upon which they more frequently enlarge than the worthlessness of an

* Davison on Prophecy, p. 44. (3d edit.)

exact compliance with the injunctions of the ceremonial law, when unaccompanied with moral purity. The opening chapter of the great evangelical prophet supplies a specimen of their doctrine upon this point:—"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and the sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.—Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."* Or, as the same lesson is inculcated with scarcely less energy of language by a contemporaneous prophet:—"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"† It is in this tone that the prophets denounce the legal formalism, the servile adherence to the letter to the disparagement of the spirit, which is natural to fallen man, and which, in a later age, proved the occasion of the final ruin and dispersion of the Jewish people.

Another striking characteristic of the prophetic teaching is, that it concerns itself with the interests of personal religion, as distinguished from the corporate faith of the nation. In the earlier revelation of Moses, it is to the nation as such that the promises and threatenings of God are addressed; the individual is merged in the body: in the prophets, what was a national promise becomes the property of each true believer. In no instance is this more remarkably exemplified than in the doctrine of repentance. "If thou (the nation) shalt return to the Lord thy God, and shalt obey

* Is. i. 11—17. † Mic. vi. 6—8.

his voice according to all that I command thee this day—; then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee:"*—in these words the law had declared the efficacy of national repentance to avert, or alleviate, the consequences of national transgression; but here it stopped. The language of prophecy upon the same subject is; "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with *him* also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."† The consolatory promises of God to the penitent are in prophecy, as every reader will have observed, addressed, for the most part, no longer to the nation in its corporate capacity, but to the pious portion of it; the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and yet were involved in the temporal calamities with which the whole community was visited. To these, the true Israel,—the meek, the broken-hearted, the mourners in Zion,—it was that the prophets were sent with a special message of consolation, assuring them that, whatever might be the fate of the earthly Zion, they were still the objects of God's providential care and tender compassion, as being interested in a better covenant and in better promises than those given to their fathers at Sinai. The gradual loosening and separation of spiritual religion from its temporary envelopment, is, in these portions of the prophetic canon, so striking, as at once to arrest the reader's attention; while in the temporal condition of the Jewish commonwealth during the principal age of prophecy we see the particular occasion of this change in the spirit of the prophetic revelation. For the first covenant was then visibly drawing to a close. The temporal condition of the Jewish people, at the commencement of the chief age of prophecy, was no longer what it had been during the reigns of David and Solomon; and before its close, the main part of the nation had been altogether dispossessed of its earthly inheritance, while the portion that remained was expiating its sins by a seventy years' captivity in Babylon. At a period when Jerusalem and the first temple were in ruins, and it might well seem to the pious Jew that God had altogether cast off his people; when, in fact, the process by which the interior Judaism, or Christianity, of the Old Testament was to be extricated from its external shell, had commenced, and was advancing to its consummation; how suitable

*Deut. xxx. 2, 3. † Is. lvii. 15.

and consolatory was the assurance conveyed to the afflicted people of God by the prophets, that this interior religion, — the worship of the heart, the faith of a humble and contrite spirit, — was alone of any real estimation with Him; the assurance that the temple services and the ceremonial law, the observance of which was, during the period of invasion and exile, necessarily interrupted, were, in their own nature and essentially, inferior in value to inward, personal, piety; and that, whether the worshipper were in Judea or in Babylon, if he only worshipped God in spirit and in truth, the substantial, because spiritual, blessings of the better covenant were his. "Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?"* To such prayers and inquiries, expressive of the perplexity with which the pious Jew beheld the apparent failure of God's promises, an answer was vouchsafed; an answer of peace and consolation, but the scope of which carried the mind far beyond the visible "beauty of holiness," conspicuous in the temple services, the loss of which was deplored. "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." — "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her; that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream."† But it is needless to multiply words in insisting upon what probably no one will be found to deny, — the peculiarly personal direction of later prophecy; or the marked line of distinction which it draws between him who was a Jew outwardly and him whose circumcision was "that of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter," together with the large space which it de-

* Is. lxiv. 9 – 12.

† Is. lxvi. 1, 2. 10 – 12.

votes to the instruction and consolation of the latter. The whole of the concluding portion of the prophecies of Isaiah, from the 40th chapter inclusive, may be cited as an instance in point.

Concurrently with this unfolding of the nature and requirements of that worship in which God really delights, the prophetic revelation communicated fuller and more distinct notices of the capital doctrines of Christianity. This simultaneous advance in the two great lines of practice and doctrine, is particularly deserving of observation. Exactly in proportion as the ritual religion of the ceremonial law is disparaged, and personal piety made the great condition of God's favour, does the covenant of Canaan, with its temporal sanctions, recede into the background, and the great truths connected with the better covenant open upon the view. To the true Israel, earthly blessings are no longer guaranteed: they are taught to seek their reward in the increased consolations which flow from a sense of God's favour and pardoning mercy, and from the prospects of a future state of blissful immortality. For it is in respect to the two great doctrines of the atonement, and of a future eternal state, that the superiority of the later to the earlier revelation is especially manifest. The indistinct promise of a deliverer from the effects of sin, to spring from the seed of the woman, had become, when Isaiah began to prophecy, expanded into a variety of particulars, which tended to fix its meaning. The nation, the tribe, the family, from which the Messiah was to descend, had been specified; and, in the prophetic psalms, His divine nature, His glory, the wide extent of His kingdom, His eternal priesthood, and His sufferings, had been made the subject of inspired song; nor do any subsequent declarations of prophecy exceed, in fulness of statement, the general assurances which abound in the book of psalms, of God's willingness to pardon the penitent. Still, much was wanting to complete the general outline of the doctrine. The important inquiry as to the *manner* in which the sufferings of Messiah were to conduce to the reversal of the effects of the fall, had been, even in the prophetic psalms, left unanswered: still less is any distinct statement upon the subject to be found in the Pentateuch. To the prophets it was reserved to make this essential addition to the faith of the pious Jew. Besides delivering a body of distinct and luminous information upon points to which some obscurity had hitherto attached, — such as the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ, His miraculous conception and birth, and the manner of His appearance upon earth — prophecy first distinctly declared the vicarious nature of

the atonement to be offered by Him. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.—The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.—He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."* "Seventy weeks are determined upon Thy people and upon Thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."† It is in these divine oracles of later prophecy that the connexion between the pardon of sin and the death of Messiah, the virtue of His atoning sacrifice and the real vicariousness of it, are, for the first time, clearly unfolded. The same may be said of the doctrines of a future state, and of the resurrection of the body. The silence of the Pentateuch upon these points has been already noticed. And whatever tendency the prophecy of the 16th psalm, or the well-known passage in the book of Job, may have had to excite the curiosity, and raise the expectations of pious men, neither of them was distinct enough to afford a solid basis of hope: the former, indeed, containing as it did a feature so peculiar as the exemption of the body from corruption, could have contributed but little to the faith and consolation of those who knew it to be the common lot of man to return to the dust from which he originally sprang. An elaborate attempt has been made to establish, from various other expressions in the book of Psalms, the conclusion that the writers entertained a clear idea, and enjoyed a sure expectation, of future eternal happiness;‡ but, not to speak of the ambiguity attaching to these passages, and the peculiar idiom of the Hebrew language, in which temporal prosperity is expressed in terms drawn from the spiritual world, there is one fact which seems strongly to militate against this hypothesis, — viz. the feelings of despondency and doubt which pervade so many of these sacred compositions when the subject of dissolution is touched upon, and the gloomy views which the writers entertain of the regions beyond the grave. Can we conceive it possible that such sentiments upon the subject as are found in the 6th, the 39th, and the 88th psalms, or in Hezekiah's song of thanksgiving for his recovery from sickness, could have been uttered by the writers, had they possessed any distinct notion of the resurrection to life eter-

* Is. liii. 5, 6. 12. † Dan. ix. 24.

‡ Graves on the Pentateuch, part iii. sect. 4. (7th edit.)

nal?* Prophecy, however, though it still left the Jewish believer without any express assurance upon the point in question, made large additions to the materials of pious hope. However imperfectly such prophecies as that of Hosea, xiii. 14; of Isaiah, xxv. 8; and the still more significant one of Daniel, xii. 2; or the prophetic vision of Ezekiel, xxxvii. may have been understood, it is impossible not to believe that they opened to the pious Hebrew, at the time when he most needed such an enlargement of view, consolatory prospects of a future state, far clearer than were vouchsafed to his forefathers. Even so, indeed, the doctrine remained the cherished hope of the serious few, and the popular opinion of the nation; it could not claim assent by virtue of an authoritative revelation. To Christ himself it was reserved to set the question at rest, and to bring "life and immortality to light," by announcing, with the authority of a teacher sent from God, that the hour was "coming, in the which they that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation."† In declaring this great doctrine, he "pronounced," to adopt the striking language of Paley, "a message of inestimable importance, and well worthy of that splendid apparatus of prophecy and miracles with which his mission was introduced and attested; a message in which the wisest of men would rejoice to find an answer to their doubts, and rest to their inquiries:"‡ who, however, seems to overstep the limits of sober statement, when he adds that, "it is idle to say that a future state had been discovered already: it had been discovered as the Copernican system was,—it was one guess among many." The triumphant *nunc dimittis* of Simeon proves that they who in that age waited for the consolation of Israel were upheld, in the prospect of death, by something stronger than a mere "guess;" and proves, also, how great had been the progress of religious faith, upon this particular point, since the days of David and Hezekiah.

But in what terms do the prophets speak of that better covenant, glimpses of which they unfold to the faithful few, for their support and consolation amidst the waning of the temporal pros-

* "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" (Ps. vi. 5.) "Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" (Ps. lxxxviii. 12.) "The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth." (Is. xxxviii. 18.)

† John, v. 28, 29.

‡ Moral and Political Philosophy, b. v. c. 9.

perity of Israel? What are the leading features of it as pourtrayed by them? In passing from the religious teaching of prophecy, to make some observations upon its properly predictive matter on the subject of Christianity, it is proper to premise that only that part of it which throws light upon the *nature* of the new dispensation will come under consideration. For to occupy the whole of this wide field, comprising, as it does, the prophetic predictions respecting the Person, as well as the kingdom of the Messiah, would require a volume instead of a section; and, moreover, would be to wander from the immediate point in hand. Even as regards the limited portion of Christian prophecy proposed to be noticed, nothing but a few brief remarks upon it will be offered.

The first thing, probably, which strikes the reader in the predictions concerning Christianity is, the promised extension of the blessings of true religion to the Gentiles. The comprehensiveness of the new dispensation, as contrasted with the restricted and local character of the existing one, is spoken of as one of its main characteristics. Moreover, it is always described as a continuation, or development in whatever sense, of the economy in being. Zion, the existing Zion, is to be enlarged, so as to admit all nations of the earth. The concluding portion of the prophecies of Isaiah is especially abundant in predictions of this character. For example:—"Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee.—Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee.—The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? And who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people," &c. "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed

shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited."*

It might have been expected that predictions like these, which describe the kingdom of Christ as issuing, by way of natural propagation, from a Jewish stock, or standing to the latter in the relation of child to parent, would be laid hold of by Romish controversialists, as confirmatory of their teaching on the subject of the Church. This, in fact, is the use that has been made of them.† More especially, that the Church should be, in the Romish sense of the word, visible, has been inferred from the famous prophecy of Isaiah and Micah: "And it shall come to pass that in the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem:"‡ a prophecy which is of the same general import with those above cited. A closer examination, however, of the scope of these predictions destroys the argument founded upon them. For what is the "Zion" to which these gracious promises are addressed? It is described, in the language of personification usual with the prophets, as "a woman forsaken, and grieved in spirit;" "barren," and "desolate;" "afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted;" as sitting in the dust, and overwhelmed with a sense of the terribleness of God's visitations.§ To administer consolation to Zion, thus depressed; to assure her, that, however dark her present dispensation might be, a brighter period awaited her; this is the direct and obvious intention of far the greater part of the prophecies in question. Whence we draw the conclusion that the object of them

* Is. xlix. 14—20.; liv. 1—3.

† Bellarm. de Eccles. milit. l. iii. c. 12.

‡ Is. ii. 2—5. Mic. iv. 1—3. Hengstenberg (Christologie, Theil. i. Abt. ii. p. 22.) well observes, that to treat this prophecy as *directly* predictive of the Christian Church at all is a mere arbitrary hypothesis. By "the mountain of the Lord's house" is meant Mount Moriah on which the temple was built, or Mount Zion (comprehending Mount Moriah); and the prophecy, like so many others of Isaiah, simply alludes to the accession of *spiritual* glory it should receive by becoming the birth-place of the Gospel, and the source whence the knowledge of Christ should diffuse itself throughout the world. So also Calvin (in loc.): "Montes alii poterant altitudine superare; sed quia gloria Dei præeminet, montem etiam in quo patefit, eminere necesse est. Montem ergo Sion per se non prædicat, sed cum suo ornatu, quo etiam universus orbis illustrandus erat."

§ Is. liv. 1—6. and 11.; lii. 2.

was, not the nation in its corporate capacity,—not the Jew by fleshly descent merely,—but the faithful servants of God,—the spiritual descendants of Abraham; whose faith, tried as it was to the utmost by the scenes of intestine corruption and disorder, and the temporal desolations of the holy city, which it was their lot to witness, needed every support to prevent its failing. But if this be so, it is obvious, not only that the Romish argument falls to the ground, but that positive confirmation is given to the opposite view; for if it was the spiritual Zion, or "holy seed," the "substance"* of the visible Israel, of which the church of Christ, embracing all nations, was to be the legitimate offshoot, it seems to follow by necessary inference, that that which distinguished the true from the visible Israel,—viz. the inward work of the spirit in the heart—was also to constitute the essential characteristic of its spiritual daughter.

Of a more positive and explicit character are the following prophetic notices of the approaching dispensation of Christ. It was to be an era of light and truth, as contrasted with the preceding one of shadow and type; the glory of the Lord was to be revealed; and, instead of the dim twilight of typical ordinances, "the Sun of Righteousness" Himself was to "arise with healing in his wings," and give light to the world.† It was to be marked by a new, if not revelation, yet manifestation, of the character of God. Hitherto He had made Himself known to His people, chiefly, though not exclusively, as the Almighty Governor of the world, a God of infinite power and holiness, inaccessible directly to sinful man; but under the Gospel He would especially manifest Himself in His attributes of love and grace. The Messiah was to be "as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land:" He was to "feed His flock like a shepherd," to "gather the lambs in His arm, and carry them in His bosom," and to "gently lead those that are with young:" the Lord was to anoint Him, "to preach good tidings unto the meek; to bind up the broken hearted; to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" "to comfort all that mourn."‡ (One of the most characteristic traits of Romanism is the virtual abeyance to which it consigns the offices of the Redeemer, as portrayed in prophecy; investing Him instead with the character of an avenging judge. Such will always be the result

* Is. vi. 13. † Is. xl. 5, 9. lx. 1—3. Mal. iv. 2.
‡ Is. xxxii. 2.; xl. 2.; lxi. 1.

where the mediatorship of the incarnate Son is superseded by a staff of human mediators.) It was to be accompanied with an extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit, whose gifts, instead of being confined, as heretofore, to a few selected individuals, were to be bestowed in rich abundance, and promiscuously.* A real atonement for sin, and an inward cleansing of the heart, of which the legal sacrifices and lustrations were but the shadows, were promised.† God would dwell among His people, not, as heretofore, in *symbol*, but really, — *i. e.* spiritually. Each of these heads might be largely illustrated from the volume of prophecy; but the citations would occupy a space incompatible with our prescribed limits; nor, in truth, are detailed proofs necessary of what every attentive reader of the prophetic revelation will recognise as its prominent characteristics.

One capital prophecy, however, there is, which, from its combining in one view almost all the characteristics of the new dispensation which lie scattered throughout the prophetic volume, deserves particular attention; and for this reason shall be here cited at length: — the prophecy in the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."‡ The reference of this prophecy to Christian times is established by inspired testimony (Heb. viii. 8.) And what are the distinctive outlines which it presents of the future dispensation? A new covenant is promised to take the place of the old one which God made with the Jewish people when he led them forth from Egypt. It is to differ from its predecessor in several essential particulars. The Mosaic covenant was national and literal; this is to be personal and spiritual. The law, which under the former cove-

* Joel, ii. 28. Is. xxxii. 15.; xliv. 3. † Ezek. xi. 19.; xxxvi. 25 — 27.
‡ Jer. xxxi. 31 — 34.

nant was external to those placed under it — a dead letter, "written and engraven on stones," — is, under the new covenant, to be a living principle, written within, prompting to the unconstrained, the universal, the natural obedience of a new heart. It is true that under the law also God had in every age those who worshipped him in spirit and in truth; but this internal service of the heart was not the specific difference of the old covenant: of the new it is to be so. They in whose "inward parts" the law is thus to be written shall then constitute the Israel of God: the Old Testament appellation shall be retained, with a changed meaning. The same Spirit who inscribes the law upon the heart of the chosen people shall illuminate their minds, and in the Scriptures, spiritually understood, unfold to them the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. There shall be no distinction as regards the communication of religious truth, between the few and the many: "all shall know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them:" "They shall be all taught of God." And the whole of this spiritual economy shall be founded upon a perfect and sufficient atonement for sin, the apprehension of which, by faith, shall give peace to the conscience, and for the spirit of bondage, under which the ancient believer, from his comparative lack of knowledge, laboured, substitute the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba! Father! What further observations are needed? We have Christianity before us in all its main features: not indeed the Christianity of Romanism or the Church system, but the Christianity of the Christian Scriptures. In reading such a prophecy as the one before us, we cannot refuse assent to the remark of Nitzsch,* — that the prophets understood the principles of the Gospel much better than some of those whose especial boast it is that they are the successors of the Apostles!

To sum up in few words: — The direction which the prophetic teaching assumes is, as contrasted with that of the law, manifestly less external and more spiritual; less ritual and more moral; less corporate and more personal. These are characteristics which lie on the very surface of the prophetic volume. The religion which it inculcates is no longer the artificial system, consisting "only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances," upon which the earlier revelation so largely dwells, assigning to the outward religious life a relative importance which throws the inward into the background: it is an evident approximation to

* Protestant. Beantwort. p. 193.

the λογικὴ λατρεία, the rational, because moral, service of Christianity. The moral precepts which do indeed occur in the books of Moses, but which are there delivered, so to speak, in a crude state, and without any hint of their essential superiority to the legal ceremonies, are taken up by the prophets, and made the chief topics of discussion: they are enlarged upon, developed, and worked out into the particulars of practice. Above all, the place which the weightier matters of the law occupy in God's estimation is, in prophecy, authoritatively fixed. The law indeed had inculcated the sum and substance of religion when it said "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself;" but the question still remains, what place in the scale of religious duty did it assign to these moral precepts? Here it is that the advance of the latter, as compared with the early revelation, is chiefly perceptible. The substantial duties of love to God and to man, which in the Pentateuch are placed side by side with the distinction between clean and unclean beasts, or with the regulation prohibiting mixed seed and garments of mingled linen and woollen,* assume in prophecy their proper place: their *relative importance* is declared. In the law, all duties of whatever kind stand upon the same level; in prophecy, they are placed one above another according to their intrinsic importance: the law enjoins promiscuously; prophecy distinguishes and classifies. This may seem to us but a small step in advance; but it was not so at the time when it was made. Moreover, the more clearly the prophetic teaching unfolded the nature and requirements of spiritual religion, the larger disclosures did it make of the blessings connected with the Christian covenant. The more Christian the revelation becomes in doctrine, the more inward a complexion do its precepts assume. In its predictive notices of the kingdom of Christ, prophecy advanced still further in the same track. For it distinctly announced the impending abrogation of the existing system, and the substitution for it of a spiritual dispensation, strongly contrasted with, and yet shadowed forth, by its predecessor. There was nothing, therefore, in the volume of prophecy to counteract the natural effect of the discipline of the law upon serious minds, but everything to promote it. Prophecy took the sincere disciple of the law by the hand, strengthened his impressions, confirmed his surmises, carried him forward in the path of spiritual religion, and at the same time opened to his view the distinctive verities of Christianity. And

* See, for example, Levit. xix. 18, 19.

all this it did, not as being the comments of uninspired men, but with the authority of an independent revelation; God himself thus virtually setting aside the elementary system under which the nation in its infancy had been placed.

Section IV.

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THAT OF CHRIST.

The lapse of a few centuries from the last of the prophets brings us to the next great epoch in the progressive course of revelation, — that of the appearance of Christ's immediate forerunner, and of the incarnate Son Himself, upon the stage of human affairs. For the purposes of the inquiry now before us, the ministry of John the Baptist and that of our Lord may be considered as together constituting one, and that the concluding, stage of the dispensations which were to serve as an introduction to the Gospel. Both were prophets; both were teachers sent from God; both were immediate heralds of the Gospel, though one was the subject itself of that Gospel, the other merely "the friend of the bridegroom." And what we have now to consider, is, the teaching of the Baptist and of Christ, as the completion of the prophetic revelation of the old dispensation. In what points Christ's teaching differs from, and goes beyond, all that had preceded it, will be pointed out in the course of the inquiry: meanwhile, to obviate misconstructions of what has been just said, it may be proper to remind the reader that the mission of our Lord, — if by that term we mean to express the whole of what He did upon earth, — embraced several objects, in themselves distinct.

Thus, for example, the chief purpose of His coming into the world was to accomplish that work of redemption which had been prefigured by the law, and foretold by the prophets. This was the special office in the economy of grace, which from the beginning had been assigned to the second person of the Trinity. Christianity was to be founded upon a series of facts; those facts being the miraculous conception of Christ, and the union in Him of the

divine and the human natures; his spotless obedience, by which the requirements of the Law were satisfied; His death upon the cross for the sins of the world; His resurrection; His ascension into heaven; and the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Of these facts, the spiritual import is declared, partly by Christ himself, and more fully by His apostles; and these inspired explanations constitute the *doctrines* of the Gospel. Redemption, in its objective aspect, was the specific work which the Son came into the world to accomplish.

Another subordinate one was, the making provision for the future establishment of His church as a visible society; distinct, at first, from the other sects which at that time abounded in Judæa, and finally from the Jewish theocracy itself. The appointment of the fundamental conditions necessary to a visible religious community proceeded, in the case of the church, from Christ himself, who, so far, may be called the founder of the visible Church. For he instituted, first, the visible rite (baptism) which marks the entrance of an individual into fellowship with him, and with those who believe upon him: secondly, the visible ordinance by which the sacred assemblies of Christians were to be distinguished from the synagogue, — viz. the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the central feature of Christian worship: and, thirdly, a body of persons (the apostles) authorised by Him to preside over and conduct the affairs of the society; who, for this purpose, were endowed with extraordinary gifts and plenary authority. All these, however, were, in the Saviour's lifetime, but prospective provisions; for His church did not come formally into existence until the day of Pentecost.

A third office which it was predicted He should sustain is that of Teacher and Prophet; an office to which that of the Jewish lawgiver was, on account of the importance of the revelations delivered through him, not unworthy of being compared: "The Lord thy God shall raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken." (Deut. xviii. 15.) Christ both confirmed the religious teaching of the prophets, and made large additions to the existing stock of revealed truth, either by authoritatively establishing doctrines which before had been but darkly hinted at, or by announcing truths hitherto unknown. Indeed, all the distinctive verities of the Christian revelation were, one after another, declared by Christ Himself, to be afterwards more fully expounded by the Apostles.

It is only in this last point of view that the ministry of our Lord is now to be considered: and, as that of the great prophet

promised to the Jews, it falls under the same category with that of John the Baptist, as properly belonging to the old dispensation. For, in strictness of language, the earthly life of Christ did not form part of the new economy of grace. He came "a minister of the circumcision," and "made under the law;" and He continued so, until, by His dying and rising again, He had redeemed His people from the curse of the Law. Then, and not until then, He became, in the proper sense of the word, the head of His Church; for it is not of Christ in His earthly, but in His glorified state, that the apostle affirms that "we" (Christians) "are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."* Under the Christian dispensation, we no longer know "Christ after the flesh;"† and they who, as the Apostles, enjoyed this privilege, exchanged it, when once the Spirit—the true connecting link between the Head and the body—had been vouchsafed, for a new and heavenly apprehension of Him. Hence possibly may be explained Christ's words to Mary: "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father."‡ The risen Saviour was no longer to be the subject of carnal intercourse, while that mystical incorporation in Him, which is the effect of the descent of the Spirit, had not yet taken place; so that in the interval between His resurrection and ascension into heaven, believers remained in the imperfect condition proper to the legal dispensation, needing, in order to be brought into mystical union with their glorified Head, the special efflux of the Spirit by which the Christian Church was formally constituted. It is not with His earthly, but with His heavenly, life that Christ has drawn up His Church into union: it is "in heavenly places" that God, having "quickened us together with Christ," has "made us sit together" with Him.§ In perfect harmony with His belonging, as concerning the flesh, to the elder dispensation, it was that our Lord was circumcised, and presented in the temple "after the custom of the Law;" that he, though greater than John, received John's baptism, deeming it right "to fulfil all righteousness," *i. e.* to comply with every divine ordinance; and that his personal ministry was confined to Judæa, and, with few exceptions, to Jews, He Himself declaring that He was "not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Hence it is that, as every attentive reader of the Gospels will have observed, the doctrinal teaching of Christ bears so much of

* Ephes. v. 30.
† 2 Cor. v. 16.
‡ John, xx. 17.
§ Ephes. ii. 5, 6.

an anticipatory character; that is, refers to a state of things which did not then exist, but which was just about to come into being. To Christ, the kingdom of heaven,—*i. e.* the Gospel dispensation —was as much a future thing as it was to John the Baptist, except in so far as it was present in Christ Himself, in whom the will of God and the will of man existed, upon earth, in perfect unison. His statements on the cardinal doctrines and mysteries of the Gospel were at the time for the most part unintelligible, not only to the carnally-minded Jew, but even to His own followers: His expressions wore to them an air of undefined mystery, which was not dissipated until Christ was fully formed in them by the descent of the Spirit. That they appear plain to us is owing to our possessing in the last, or apostolic, revelation, which throws a flood of light upon the law, the prophets, and the teaching of our Lord Himself, the key to their meaning. Perhaps it is needless to insist further upon the fact (which, however, has not always been kept in mind), that the Christian dispensation formally commenced, not with the incarnation of Christ, but with the descent of the Spirit; and that, as the provisions which our Lord made for the visible separation of His Church from Judaism—such as the formation of the apostolic college and the Sacraments—remained, until He was perfected, forms without substance,—the visible receptacle without the informing spirit,—so His teaching partook of the same anticipatory, and so far imperfect, character. Had this been recollected, the disputes which have arisen upon the question, how far was the Gospel preached by Christ Himself? might have been avoided. The Gospel was preached by our Lord as it had been preached by the prophets, only much more explicitly; but the teaching both of Christ and of the prophets needed, for their illustration, the fuller disclosure of the counsels of God which was given through the apostles. To affirm this is not to disparage the teaching of our Lord; unless it be a disparagement to it to maintain that the revelation of God, having been throughout progressive, the concluding portion of it may be expected to throw light upon all that preceded it.

But to return;—the state of religion among the Jews, when Christ and his forerunner appeared, may be gathered with sufficient accuracy from the notices on the subject furnished by the Gospel history. The repeated chastisements which its ancient propensity to idolatry had drawn down upon the nation had at length produced the desired effect; and after the Babylonish captivity, the Jews appear to have been thoroughly weaned from the

favourite sin of their forefathers. Simultaneously however with this remarkable change for the better in the national sentiment, certain less favourable characteristics began, for the first time, to exhibit themselves, or, at least, assumed a prominence which had not hitherto belonged to them. The Jews had been always prone to overvalue the external privileges which, as the chosen people of God, they enjoyed; but after the Babylonish captivity, this feeling became more intense, and gave rise to a spiritual pride of the most virulent character. The deeper the political degradation of the nation, the closer it clung to its religious prerogatives; and consoled itself, under the yoke of its temporal conquerors, with the hope, that the time was approaching when they who now trampled Zion under foot would approach her as suppliants, and acknowledge the universal sway of Messiah. It was at this period of their history that the peculiar spirit of vindictive contempt and rancour towards other nations, which attracted the notice, and awakened the curiosity, of heathen historians, displayed itself among the Jewish people. In the sect of the Pharisees, the peculiar characteristics of which are so strikingly portrayed in the New Testament Scriptures, this phase of Jewish feeling found, in our Lord's time, its chief exponent. A rigid formalism in religion, which however was compatible with the utmost laxity in morals, distinguished this sect. The course of religious progress, as it is discernible in the prophetic revelation, was by the Pharisees completely reversed: religion once more became a matter of law, or external prescript; the letter stifled the spirit; positive enactments superseded moral duties; and a ceremonial worship took the place of the inward communion of the heart with God. The legalism of the Pharisee, however, was of a more onerous character than the original institute of Moses; for to the appointments of the latter he added a multitude of traditionary prescriptions, placing them on a level with the divine commands. By his traditionary interpretations of Scripture, or additions to the written Word, he evaded compliance with the plainest precepts of the moral code. The relative importance of duties he was unable, because he was unwilling, to discern; and, unlike the prophets, postponed "the weightier matters of the law—judgment, justice, and mercy"—to its ritual appointments. With a conscience thus destitute of moral sensitiveness, it was but natural that he should be indifferent to the anticipatory notices of the Gospel which the volume of prophecy furnished; or, if he did bestow attention upon them, should wrest their interpretation to suit his carnal tastes.

Hence the secular views which the Pharisees entertained respecting the Messiah, and the nature of His kingdom. In combination with these peculiarities, this sect exhibited an intense zeal for the propagation of their religion; compassing sea and earth to make proselytes, but little solicitous to promote the moral improvement of those whom they induced to submit to the yoke of the law.

And yet, revolting as Pharisaism was in its practical aspect, the Pharisees, as contrasted with the other Jewish sects, were the representatives of orthodox Judaism. They sat in Moses's seat. Whatever unwritten traditions they might append to the written Word, that Word itself they received in all its integrity. Their sectarian spirit had, at least, one good effect: repelling every admixture of foreign elements, it preserved them from the taint of heathen philosophy and oriental mysticism, which, whenever they were combined with the Jewish revelation, corrupted it, as they afterwards did Christianity. The effect of the infelicitous combination alluded to was especially visible in the Jews of the Alexandrian school, of which the sect of the Sadducees was, in all probability, an offshoot. Presenting in many points a favourable contrast with the exclusiveness and formalism of the Pharisees, and exhibiting a laudable desire to elicit the full spiritual meaning of Scripture; the tendency, nevertheless, of this school was to merge the historical objects of the national faith in cold abstractions. The Alexandrine Jew lost his hold of that which constituted the central idea of the ancient theocracy, the expectation of a personal Messiah; and interpreted the glowing visions of prophecy upon this subject as denoting the dissemination of religious light and knowledge from Jerusalem, as from a centre, throughout the world. "It is the destiny of the Jews," says Philo, "to be the prophets and priests of mankind."* So vague, so rationalistic, a view of the Old Testament Scriptures could supply no historical basis for Christianity; and the sects in which it prevailed, such as that of the Essenes, proved less susceptible of the Gospel than the Pharisees themselves. In Sadducecism, the latitudinarian tendencies of Alexandrine Judaism had worked themselves out into positive unbelief, leading to a rejection of the doctrines of the separate existence of the soul, and of a resurrection of the body; both of them, in our Lord's time, articles of the popular faith. For this reason it is, that so large a portion of Christ's discourses, as recorded in the Gospels, is addressed to the Pharisees.

* Quoted by Neander, Church History, vol. i. part 1. p. 63.

However great the change that must take place in the moral sentiments of the Pharisee before he could enter the kingdom of heaven, he had nothing dogmatically false to unlearn; and the orthodox faith, to which he clung, offered a point of connexion with Christianity, which was wanting in the irreligious indifference to the peculiar hopes and privileges of Israel which characterised the other sects. Hence, too, it was, that the sect of the Pharisees was both numerous and influential, while the Sadducees had comparatively few adherents, and were not in popular favour; the abstractions of a speculative religion have never been found capable of gaining a strong hold upon the popular mind. There is every reason to believe that in Pharisaism, the general national feeling of the Jews, in the time of Christ, expressed itself in a concentrated form.

The foregoing remarks upon the prevailing cast of religious sentiment among the Jews, when our Lord and His forerunner entered on their public ministry, will enable us the better to understand the special scope of that ministry, which may be briefly described as an endeavour to awaken the dormant moral sense, and vivify the conscience, by a full exposition of the spiritual import of the moral law; in which point of view it was partly a repetition, and partly an enlargement, of the prophetic revelation, in the points which are characteristic of the latter.

The immediate forerunner of Christ came, as it had been predicted he should, in "the spirit and power of Elias,"* exhibiting in his character, and even in his outward appearance, the earnestness and austerity which distinguished that great prophet. His ministry has been sometimes described as forming the connecting link between the old and the new dispensations; but, in truth, it belonged exclusively to the old. In John the Baptist the law is seen consummating its proper office of producing conviction of sin; beyond this his ministry did not advance; nor could it have done so without trenching upon the peculiar province of the Gospel. The necessity of repentance, as a preparation for the approaching kingdom of heaven, was all that he was empowered to preach. To unfold the spirituality and strictness of the divine law, to tear the mask from hypocrisy, to break up the fallow ground of the conscience, — this was the object of his mission; not to offer either pardon for past sin or strength from above for future obedience.†

* Mal. iv. 5, 6.

† "He came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for

"Among those that" were "born of women," indeed,—those, that is, who lived under the law when the regenerating spirit, in its fulness, was not vouchsafed,—"there" had "not arisen a greater than John the Baptist:"* it was his peculiar privilege to see with the eye of sense what other prophets and holy men had only beheld in spirit—God manifest in the flesh, to bear testimony to the actual presence of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world:" it was his province, too, to close the prophetical revelation of the Old Testament, with the announcement which brings us to the very threshold of the new covenant,—"that he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life;"† and which, as regards distinctness of doctrinal statement, has no parallel in antecedent prophecy. Nevertheless, "He that is least in the kingdom of God"—or the gospel dispensation—"is greater than he:" for the spiritual blessings of an accomplished atonement, appropriated by faith, and the actual presence of the promised Comforter, both of them special privileges of the new covenant, were not the Baptist's either to possess or to announce.

And as his preaching, so his baptism, was but preparatory and imperfect. It was not a baptism for the remission of sins; nor did it either symbolise or confer the regenerating spirit: it was not a "laver of regeneration," but a baptism "with water unto repentance,"—the outward lustration (an ordinary one among the Jews) symbolizing the effect of the law upon the conscience, viz. a heartfelt conviction of sin. For the *μετάνοια*, or repentance, which John preached, was, in its nature, negative rather than positive: it consisted in the preparation of the heart for a cordial reception of the Gospel, whenever it should be promulgated; in the putting off "the old man with his deeds;" in the removal of spiritual impediments to the influences of Christianity. But it did not involve that positive element of internal renewal which results from union with Christ: it represented regeneration merely in its negative aspect: it was the sign and seal of *fitness* for the spiritual blessings of redemption, not of those blessings themselves. Hence its essential inferiority to the Christian sacrament. Christian baptism symbolises the actual transfer from a state of nature into a state of

the remission of sins" (Luke, iii. 3.): not, as Olshausen remarks, that he preached remission of sins, but a repentance which was to prepare for, to lead the way to, that blessing: *εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν*. "Nam quod prædicabat baptismum pœnitentiæ in remissionem delictorum in futuram remissionem enuntiatum est." Tertull. de Bap. s. 10.

* Matt. xi. 11. † John, iii. 36.

grace, and seals to the believer the blessings of the new covenant. In it we are not only buried with Christ to sin, but we rise with him to a new and heavenly life: we not only put off the old man, but put on the new. Christian baptism, therefore, represents regeneration in its fulness, — in its positive as well as its negative aspect, the spirit as well as the water; and so differs from, and is superior to, the symbol of the Baptist's ministry.

But of what nature was "the kingdom of heaven" which John announced as at hand, and to prepare men for which was his mission? The expression, as is well known, is used in the New Testament in various senses, which it is not necessary here to enumerate. Whether we take it to signify the unseen dominion of the Spirit in the hearts of believers — as when our Lord says "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke, xvii. 20, 21.)*; — or the visible church in its present mixed condition, — as in the parables of the tares and the net; or the future manifestation of the church at the day of Christ (Luke, xxi. 31.); or, in general, the Christian dispensation; is not material to the question before us. The essential point to be noticed is, that into this "kingdom of God" — or new dispensation about to be introduced by Christ — there was no entrance save by the door of repentance: none could become partakers of its privileges without a change of heart. The Baptist's censures were directly aimed at the religious formalism, and reliance upon external privileges, which then characterised the Jewish people, who were warned that the axe was about to be laid to the root of the trees, and the sifting fan applied to the floor, with the intent of detecting and casting away whatever should be inwardly unsound; and that no carnal connexion with Abraham could, of itself, entitle them to the blessings to be purchased by Christ's death, and bestowed upon believers in Him. Might it not have been at once gathered by those who heard the Baptist's words, that the future dispensation, of which he announced the approach, was not to be primarily an external and visible, but an inward and spiritual, one?

The lesser luminary speedily disappeared to make way for the greater. The first notice which we have of our Lord's ministry

* "The Pharisees demanded of our Lord when the kingdom of God should come. He shows, in His reply, that the access of the religious system so represented as a kingdom to the individual is, in the first instance, by means of an internal work: without which no man may enter therein. It is when the principle by virtue of which we become obedient subjects of the kingdom of God is already born within us, that the corresponding outward development is required." — Gladstone's Church Principles, &c. p. 112. Precisely so; and this is all that Protestants affirm.

connects it immediately with that of John: "From that time" (the time of John's imprisonment), "Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* In this, its negative aspect, the teaching of our Lord was identical with that of his forerunner. Like the Baptist, He insisted upon the necessity of an inward change as a preparation for his kingdom; like him, too, He unveiled the hypocrisy of the Pharisee, and impressed upon his hearers the worthlessness of external religionism, apart from purity of heart. He released the conscience from the yoke of traditionary observances not prescribed by Scripture, and stimulated it by unfolding the full extent and spirituality of the Moral Law. These are confessedly the leading features of our Lord's teaching, so far as it was opposed to the prevailing formalism of the age; and in this light it appears as the summing up of all that the prophets had urged on the same topics; as the supplement, not the subversion, of the earlier revelation (Matt. v. 17.). As the prophetic instruction is more spiritual than that of the Law, so the teaching of Christ is more spiritual than that of the prophets: and thus the progressive tendency of revelation from the form to the "spirit and truth" of religion maintains itself to the end.

The question, in what sense and how far Christ was a *lawgiver*, so much debated between the Romish and Protestant theologians of the seventeenth century, appears to admit of an easy reply. The tendency of Romanism to transform the Gospel into a legal institute, like that of Moses, is perceptible in the emphasis with which the Council of Trent affirms that Christ came, not only as a redeemer to save, but as a lawgiver to be obeyed†; but the obedience due to Christ in his kingly office can be sufficiently secured without making Him a lawgiver in the sense in which Moses was. In this sense, Christ did not appear in the character of a lawgiver; on the contrary, He "is the end," exhibiting in Himself the scope and the fulfilment, "of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."‡ Had it been His purpose to establish a new law resembling that of Moses, he would, as has been well remarked, have delivered, in the first instance, to his followers, a system of rites and observances, together with a ceremonial law and a ritual,

* Matt. iv. 17.

† "Si quis dixerit Christum Jesum a Deo hominibus datum fuisse ut redemptorem cui fidant, non etiam ut legislatorem cui obediant, anathema sit." De Justif. Can. 21.

‡ Rom. x. 4.

analogous to that given at Sinai.* Such a system is indeed attributed to Him; but not by the writers of the New Testament Scriptures. A ceremonial law finds no place in the original promulgation of Christianity. The only two visible ordinances which Christ did appoint, He appointed, as will be shewn hereafter, on principles very different from those which govern a legal system of religion. Even the Sermon upon the Mount, which of all our Lord's discourses bears the greatest resemblance to a new code of law, is not so in reality. It does not "take the place"† of the law inscribed on the tables of stone: it is that very law itself in its full spiritual meaning. It is a republication of the moral Law by Him who had formerly delivered it at Sinai, and who now once more delivered it, freed from the false glosses and expositions of the Pharisees, and with its inner spirit more perfectly unfolded. Viewed in this light, this authoritative exposition of the moral Law was directed to awaken the conscience of the hearers long benumbed under the spell of formalism, and lead them, under a conviction of sin, to Himself, the Saviour of sinners. But the discourse is more than a spiritual exposition of the original Law: it contains an element which does not belong to the Law at all as such. The Law, in its own proper nature, requires and commands, without recognising man's weakness or offering him assistance; but in Christ's new Law, — if we will call it so — the grace of the Gospel is either presupposed or offered. For to pronounce the "poor in spirit," those "that mourn," those "that hunger and thirst after righteousness," "blessed;" what is this but to set forth the efficacy of repentance, and faith? To direct men to call upon God as their Heavenly Father, to expect forgiveness of sin from Him, and to rely upon his providence for the supply of their temporal necessities; what is this but to presuppose that they are reconciled to Him by faith in His son Jesus Christ. The promise that prayer shall be heard is a strictly evangelical one: it is a declaration of God's unmerited goodness; it presumes, on the part of the suppliant, a sense of spiritual neediness, which itself is a gift of grace; and on God's part, the appointment of a mediator, through whose intervention prayer becomes acceptable. In this particular point of view, the Sermon upon the Mount is rather the

* Nitzsch, Protestant. Beantwort. &c., p. 198.

† "If the two tables of stone which contained the law are destroyed, yet the Sermon on the Mount takes their place; if though Moses is gone, Christ is come;"&c. &c. Newman's Sermons, vol. iv. serm. 18. The passage, written before the author had become a Romanist, is worthy of perusal, as illustrating the substantial affinities of systems of doctrine.

full portraiture of Christian sanctity than a repetition of the law: it sets forth the standard at which the Christian — he upon whose heart the law is supposed to be already written by the Spirit of God — should aim.*

So far as Christ has delivered to us the nature and extent of evangelical righteousness, as distinguished from that of the Scribes and Pharisees, and bestows upon believers grace for the fulfilment of that righteousness, He may be called a lawgiver; but this is not the sense intended by the theologians of Rome. What is meant is, that Christ was the author of a new visible system, founded on the same principles as the old one; by incorporation in which salvation is to be attained.† How wide of the truth this notion is, will be evident to every reader of the Gospels. The real character in which Christ appeared was that of a rabbi, or teacher; an office which had no necessary connexion with the ceremonial law, or the priesthood. This is a very important feature of our Lord's ministry, viewed as introductory to the Gospel dispensation. For thus was formally established, in the person of the Saviour Himself, the Word of God as the chief instrument, under the new economy, of drawing men to God. Christ Himself, the Eternal Word, appears as a preacher of His own approaching spiritual kingdom: He invites to Himself the weary and heavy laden that they may have rest; He promises everlasting life to those who shall accept the invitation. No one comes to him except the Father draw him; but every one that has heard and learned of the Father does come to Him, and to those who thus come He gives life. Hence is to be explained the peculiar emphasis which our Lord everywhere laid upon faith, as the condition of the exercise of His divine power, whether the case that required it was a bodily or a spiritual one. For faith and the Word are correlative terms; and, therefore, simultaneously with the installation of the Word, as one chief instrument of the Spirit, faith was constituted the essential connecting link between the sinner and Christ, and this at a time when faith could not possibly mean an assent of the understanding to certain doctrines, but, simply, trust in a person. "What shall we do that we might work the

* See Bp. Taylor's sermon upon Matt. v. 20.

† "Certum hoc est, Christum in ministerio prædicationis suæ non solum evangelium de gratuitâ peccatorum remissione, sed etiam legem auditoribus suis proposuisse, eandem a corruptelis pharisaicis vindicasse et pristino nitori restituisse. Verum de eo non quærunt pontifices, quando Christum legislatorem fuisse pugnant, sed ideo et hoc respectu id nominis ipsi competere statuunt, quod novas quasdam leges promulgaverit, ac legem Mosaicam perfectionem reddiderit." — Gerhard, loc. 15. cap. 7.

works of God?"* the question expresses the spirit of the ancient dispensation in which, not the Word, but a course of coercive discipline, — the "bodily exercise" of the law, — was the external means whereby the Spirit operated on men's hearts; and not to believe, but to do, was the special requirement of God in reference to His people. Equally indicative of the spirit of the new economy is the reply, "This is the work of God, that ye believe upon him whom He hath sent;" the reception of purchased and proffered blessings, not the performance of prescribed works, or, as St. Paul calls it, "the law of faith," being the distinctive feature of the Christian life.

True it is that the Jew also had the Word of God, as delivered to him from time to time by the prophets; but he had it not as a standing ordinance, and means of grace: the ministry of it was not a perpetual, still lest a predominant, feature of the legal dispensation. The Levitical ceremonial, and the temple worship, constituted the distinctive and permanent service of the Jewish system; while the prophetic function, which approaches more nearly to that of the Christian ministry, was irregular in its exercise, and often intermitted for long periods of time. Under the Christian economy the temple service is not symbolical, but verbal;† the Word now occupying the place which the Levitical ritual did formerly. By the Word, regeneration is effected, or begun;‡ by it the Church is built up, and advances to perfection, it being for this end that "prophets," "evangelists," "pastors," and "teachers," all ministers of the Word, have been given by Christ;§ by it the Church is, or ought to be, governed, and controversies decided. All this is plain enough from Scripture; but the point now to be observed is, that the approaching change, by which the external instrument of the Spirit was to become spiritual in nature, addressing itself to the understanding, not to the senses, was inaugurated by Christ himself. For His was a ministry of teaching, not of type and ceremonial; as was that also of His immediate followers and assistants, the twelve and the seventy who were sent forth "to preach the kingdom of God."‖ The ministration of the Spirit through the Word commenced while Christ was upon earth, though it did not assume its properly

* John, vi. 28.

† On this subject some good remarks will be found in Hinds' "Three Temples," pp. 83 — 96.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 23. Jas. i. 18.

§ Ephes. iv. 2. &c.

‖ Luke, ix. 2.

sacramental character until Christ had been glorified, and the Spirit Himself had come to take Christ's place upon earth.

To believe upon Christ—that is, to recognise in Him the Son of God, the Saviour of the world—was the great act of faith which the Jews of our Lord's time were called upon to exercise, the principal part of the final probation to which the nation was subjected. And the requirement was well suited to try the moral habits of men. For what Christ really was—His essential glory—was not preceptible to the eye of sense, being hidden under the veil of His earthly humiliation. To the unenlightened eye the "consolation of Israel" was but Jesus of Nazareth, the son of the carpenter, whose father, and mother, and brethren, they knew: His visible appearance corresponding with the predictions of prophecy, that he should "grow up as a tender plant, and a root out of a dry ground; without form, comeliness, or any beauty that men should desire him."* Hence the fallaciousness of the inference, that, because the Word became flesh, the Church must be (in the Romish sense) a visible corporation: a favourite line of argument with the modern school of Romanists. For, if it be undoubtedly true that the Word was made flesh, it is not less true that to discern that Jesus of Nazareth was the eternal Word required the eye of faith, not of sight: it was not in that which could be seen in Him that the essential glory of the Saviour resided. Multitudes saw Christ "after the flesh," heard His word, and witnessed His miracles, who yet never beheld in Him the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world: "He was in the world, and the world knew him not."† If some perceived what He was, it was owing to a special work of the Holy Spirit, unsealing their eyes. The faith of Peter, for example, which led to the confession, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God," was a divine gift: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."‡ Let it be granted, for argument's sake, that the Church is the perpetual incarnation of Christ upon earth, it must yet be remembered that it was possible to see Christ outwardly, without apprehending Him spiritually; that His real glory—"the glory as of the only begotten of the Father"—lay remote from sense: that Jesus, as "God manifest in the flesh," was an object, not of sight, but of faith;—which is precisely what Protestants affirm of His body, the Church.

* Is. liii. 2.
† John, i. 10.
‡ Matt. xvi. 17.

Finally, it is worthy of remark, that, as in the prophetic teaching, the more interior the character which religion assumes, the more of Christian doctrine does the revelation contain; so in the ministry of Christ, in which, both in the Saviour's person and teaching, the perfect pattern of evangelical righteousness is set forth, every essential doctrine of the Gospel was promulgated. The doctrines of the Trinity, of the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost, of redemption through the death of the incarnate Son, of the necessity of the new birth, and of a resurrection of the body to life, or to death eternal; all these, the distinctive verities of the new economy were enunciated by Christ Himself; and the teaching of the apostles is but a fuller exposition of the heads of doctrine furnished in the discourses of their divine Master. What remains to be said concerning the specific character of our Lord's doctrinal teaching, will more fitly come under a subsequent section.

And here, before passing from the old dispensation to the new, we may pause for a moment to take a cursory review of the ground passed over. The chief point which the foregoing observations have been directed to establish is, that the revelation of God has from the first been progressive, the direction being from a less to a more spiritual and interior character. We have seen how the discipline of the Law, especially when considered in conjunction with the word of prophecy, must have worked towards the formation and development, in the pious part of the Jewish people, of a religion which, if we cannot call it Christian, yet contained in itself the chief elements of a Christian spirit; and just in proportion as it did so, receded from the legal system, under the shelter of which it had grown up. The moral law convinced the worshipper of sin, and thereby led him to long for a spiritual cleansing from sin; the rites of the ceremonial law suggested the idea, and raised an expectation, of such an atonement yet to come: impressions which were fixed and strengthened by the prophetic revelation. But while thus training its pupils, the legal system paved the way to its own abolition, and only waited the appearance of Him, who is the end of the law, to resign its charge to the liberty and responsibilities of religious manhood. "To Him give all the prophets witness;" and in proportion as they bring out to view the distinctive features of the new covenant, do they inculcate the superior importance of the moral law, and dwell upon religion in its personal aspect. In the fulness of time the Saviour appeared, Himself made under the

law, but not the promulgator of a new law intended to supply the place of that which, having decayed and waxed old, was ready to vanish away. Both His forerunner and Himself follow in the track of the prophets, and announce the approaching kingdom of God as, primarily, an internal operation of the Spirit upon the heart of man. At the same time, what was wanting in the prophetic anticipations of Christian doctrine was supplied, what was obscure in them was cleared up by Christ Himself; who thus, as none before Him had done, brought life and immortality to light.

The mode of operation proper to the new economy, — viz., the ministration of the Spirit through the Word, as an instrument, was both established and exemplified in the Redeemer's own personal ministry. All preliminary dispositions having been thus made, the next step in God's dealings with mankind was to be the actual introduction of the new dispensation itself; and surely we can already pronounce, with confidence, that whatever features it may present, they will not be those of the elementary legal system, which had long since become antiquated: it will not be a return to the rudiments of religion which had sufficed for the spiritual infancy of the people of God. Should the outward theocracy which controlled men's actions be found giving place in Christianity to an inner one — the theocracy of the Spirit administered through the Word, — it is only what we have been led to expect from an observation of the course which revelation has held from its commencement. How far these anticipations are actually realised in the Gospel dispensation, is the question to be now considered. But before quitting this part of the discussion, we may observe that the view that has been taken of the progressive course of revelation removes a difficulty connected with the present condition of the Jews, which probably has occurred to most students of the history of that people, — viz. that whereas, in their former calamities, idolatry was the sin that provoked God to anger, in their last and greatest one, no such sin could be laid to their charge: the Jews after their return from the captivity exhibiting a strong detestation of idolatrous practices. True it is, that the Jews, in the time of Christ, were as remarkable for their abhorrence of idolatry as their forefathers had been for their propensity to it; and had religious illumination remained amongst them what it was when the law was first promulgated, we might be at a loss to understand why they were at length cut off from being the people of God. But it had not so remained. The full import of the Sinaitic covenant — the nature of the religious service which God

requires — had been unfolded by the prophets; who at the same time, for the consolation of those who felt that they could not attain to the required standard of righteousness, had given promise of a better covenant, to be founded in the person of Messiah, under which sin should be forgiven, and strength imparted as a matter of grace. It was for their rejection of this new covenant — a rejection proceeding from a distaste to the moral law, as fully exemplified in Christ — that the predicted judgment finally fell upon the Jews. To the prohibitions of the law in reference to idolatry they gave heed; but the moral duties of it — "judgment, justice, and mercy" — they disregarded; and these were the duties which by their own prophets had been enforced, as infinitely superior in value to the legal rites. Sunk in religious formalism, they obstinately clung to the letter, to the disparagement of the Spirit; displayed an equal indifference to the warnings and promises of prophecy; and at length rejected Him who came, not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them. Moses and Elias had both borne witness to Christ, as their fulfilment; but the Jews, with a blindness which was the consequence, and the punishment, of moral depravity, clung to the shadow, while they cast away the substance; and though they did well to adhere to the literal commandment, were rejected because they did not do more, — viz. accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

Section I.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS.

In the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, the Christian dispensation is seen in actual operation; for that with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost that dispensation properly commences will probably be admitted by all parties. Moreover, in these chapters the Church of Christ is first spoken of as in actual existence. What in our Lord's discourses is a matter of anticipation or prophecy, here appears as a matter of fact. Though not at first fully aware of the great change which had taken place in their religious standing, still less of its ultimate consequences, the first believers at once formed a separate community in the bosom of the Jewish theocracy; a community having, for its distinctive marks, adherence to the Twelve Apostles, baptism in the name of Christ, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Thenceforth the Church becomes a matter of history; and its history is nothing less than that of the vicissitudes, prosperous and adverse, which the kingdom of God upon earth has in the lapse of ages passed through.

It has already been remarked that, far from intending to establish a mere invisible fellowship of the Spirit, our Lord contemplated His Church as having a visible existence, His followers as collected into societies. With this view, He Himself instituted certain external badges of Christian profession, to come into use when they should be needed, and took measures to qualify a small and select company of believers, by attaching them constantly to His person while His earthly ministry lasted, and giving them a formal commission with extraordinary powers, when He left the world, to preside over the affairs and direct the organisation of Christian societies. These essential conditions of the existence of any regular society we find from the very first in being in the Church: the Apostles were the officers, and, collectively, the organ of the community; members were admitted into it by baptism; and they

testified their continuance therein by participating in the sacrament of Christ's body and blood. As we advance further in the inspired history, we find additions made to these simple elements of social fellowship; the organisation of the Christian society becomes more complex and systematic; questions of polity and order occupy no small portion of the apostolic epistles; and we have every reason to believe, if not from Scripture alone, yet from the unanimous voice of authentic history, that, towards the close of the Apostolic age, Christianity had almost everywhere crystallised itself into a certain definite and well known form of ecclesiastical polity.

These are facts which cannot be gainsayed; and the Romanist triumphantly appeals to them as confirmatory of his theory of the Church. And true it is, that if that theory merely affirmed that the Church is necessarily visible, and to be distinguished by certain external notes, it would rest on most certain evidence of Scripture. But the Romanist affirms much more than this: he maintains that the true being of the Church — its specific difference as compared with other societies — lies in its visible characteristics; and that the form and the spirit are so inseparably united, that to introduce any alteration into the one would be to destroy the other. It is needless to add that this is also the fundamental notion which lies at the root of the so-called Church system. Obviously we have here a distinct question: for it does not follow that because the Church is necessarily visible, its essential being lies in that which gives it visible existence. The strong presumptive evidence against this view, which the course of revelation under the old dispensation furnishes, may indeed be rebutted by evidence of an opposite character, drawn from the facts of the Christian economy: but it is clear that such evidence must be of the most convincing kind, for the theory comes to us, burdened with an *à priori* improbability. To the facts, then, of the Christian dispensation we now turn.

By way of clearing the path before us for the discussion which is to follow, let us endeavour to conceive what the characteristic features of a religious system might be expected to be, which, on the one hand, should be embodied in a visible society or societies, and, on the other, instead of working, like the Mosaic system, from without inwards, should have its essential being within, and work from within outwards: a system, that is, in which that which gives it visible existence should be the evidence and manifestation, not the formative instrument, of the life within.

And, in the first place, admitting that such a system must have ritual ordinances, and be embodied in a visible polity, we should expect, not only that they would be fewer in number, but that their relation to the inner life, or spirit, which unites the members of the community, would be different from that which is characteristic of a system like that of Moses: that, instead of being intended to impart from without a specific direction to religious sentiment, they would presuppose the existence of that sentiment in some maturity of growth; and, as has just been observed, be rather signs of its presence, and means of strengthening it, than a mould of discipline by which it is to be, in the first instance, impressed. As regards polity, in particular, we should expect to find the visible organisation of such a system the result not so much of an external prescription, as of an effort on the part of the life within to throw itself out into a suitable organic form.

Again, were it competent to the founder of such a system, in selecting the ordinances and polity by which it should be distinguished, to adopt either new ones or such as his followers had been familiar with, as being based upon actually existing customs, we should expect to find him taking the latter course: that is, the system would be made to differ as little as possible, as regards external marks of distinction, from the existing one out of which it was to spring, such an antecedent system being supposed to be in existence. For it is obvious that a complete apparatus of new institutions is the proper instrument for working upon human nature from without inwards. If this be the mode of operation which a religious legislator proposes to adopt, he sets out by endeavouring to effect as complete a separation as possible between his own and the surrounding systems of religion. His aim being to interrupt the course of custom, and to give an entirely new bent to the religious life, he will isolate those for whom he legislates, by fencing them round with institutions altogether different from those to which they have been accustomed. Thus, for example, there is throughout the law of Moses a studied multiplication of rites and ceremonies up to that time unknown to the Israelites: the system seems needlessly loaded with observances, until we recollect that it was intended to repel assimilation with the modes of religious worship then prevalent, and to stamp a new character upon the Jewish people. If a new religion, then, seems to avoid, as much as possible, any deviation, as regards its rites and polity, from existing customs and practices; if it appear by no means solicitous to effect a violent separation, in this particular, between

the old and the new state of things; it may be inferred that its true being lies not in its forms, but in its interior life.

Once more, it would be natural to suppose that, under such a system, the work of external organisation would be one of time, and advance gradually; additions being made from time to time, as necessity should require, or circumstances render desirable. For a *natural* development of this kind is incompatible with the idea of a religious institution, the object of which is to grasp human nature with a firm external hold, and to repress instead of giving liberty to its interior impulses. Presuming either that no such interior impulse is present, or that it is immature and feeble, an institution of the latter kind aims at supplying its absence or feebleness by imposing an artificial frame-work of institutions, fully wrought out in detail, and minutely elaborated, which allows no free play to the religious life, and discourages any spontaneous movement in the work of organisation. A legal system is neither plastic nor self-developing: it is given from without and given *uno afflatu*, complete in all its parts: the only real development of which it is capable is that of the spirit which its rites and forms embody, while the form itself remains what it was when first delivered. Of this kind manifestly were the institutions of Moses. The law was given fully digested, and wrought out into particulars; and no part of the Jewish polity or worship was left to be gradually developed according to the exigencies of times and circumstances. The entire system, such as it was, was at once imposed upon the people for whom it was devised; and a solemn prohibition was added against the introduction of unauthorised additions or alterations into the original draught, as it came from the hands of the divine Legislator.

Let us now apply these tests to the Church of Christ, as it appears in visible existence in the inspired pages; from its first formal constitution on the day of Pentecost to the period when its polity is found to have assumed a definite shape: a period extending to about A. D. 70.

Section II.

THE SACRAMENTS.

Two ritual ordinances, and two only, are recorded to have been instituted by Christ Himself as distinctive of His religion, — the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. That these ordinances were intended to be perpetual notes of His Church; that, in point of fact, the celebration of them is coeval with Christianity itself, and has never, for any length of time, or in any large portion of the Church, been interrupted; these are points upon which, between Romanists and Protestants, no difference exists. To the visible notes which emanated from Christ Himself we may perhaps add — though it stands not in the same degree of importance — the administration of discipline; for the evidence is altogether in favour of that interpretation of Matt. xviii. 15 — 19., which makes the passage to contain an anticipatory provision for the exercise of discipline in Christian societies, to be applied in practice when the societies themselves should come into existence.

The question now before us is, in what relation do these ordinances stand to the system of which they are a part? And the first thing to be remarked is, that had it been the principal design of our Lord to establish a new visible system of religion, distinct from the Jewish institutions, we may take upon ourselves to say that He would have instituted other ordinances than these, and in a different manner. For what could be less fitted to constitute the ceremonial of such a system than the two sacraments, according to their original institution and idea?

In the first place, neither of these ordinances were, as regards the outward sign, new appointments: they were founded on actually existing and well-known customs. Baptism, in one form or another, had long been in common use among the Jews; and if it had not, the ministry of John the Baptist must have familiarised them with it as a symbol of repentance. Thus Christ selected, as the initiatory sacrament of His Church, an ordinance differing, as regards the outward sign, in no respect from the rite by which it was the custom to initiate a proselyte into the Jewish religion,*

* See Wall's History of Infant Baptism; Introduction.

and that which His own forerunner had adopted to be the symbol of his ministry. So it was also with the other sacrament. The Passover, with its attendant ceremonies, the evening meal, the breaking of bread, and the drinking of wine, was already in existence when Christ came; and it was while celebrating the feast with His disciples, in compliance with the injunctions of the Law, that He took occasion to set apart one of its customary rites, to be the sacrament of His body and blood. In both cases, the visible material from which He was to select the symbols of fellowship with Himself was in being, and He merely transferred existing ceremonies to a new use. Wherein then lay the essence of the transformation by which the Jewish rite became a Christian sacrament? for that a vast change passed over the baptismal washing of John and the paschal breaking of bread when they became Christian baptism and the Lord's Supper, no Christian doubts. It lay simply in the fact of Christ's having attached to them His name, His remembrance, His promise, thereby constituting them pledges and means of grace. The change wrought was indeed an essential one, but of a spiritual nature: the action remained the same; it was the import, the spiritual efficacy, in which the difference lay. In this point of view, the famous aphorism, *Accedit verbum ad elementum et fit Sacramentum*, contains important truth; for it was, in fact, the accession of the Word, the divine command, and the divine presence, to old and familiar symbols that made the latter Christian sacraments, precisely as, by virtue of the promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst," a synagogue of Jewish believers was transformed into a Christian congregation. Moreover, to neither of the ordinances in question were appended those circumstantials of ritual order which characterised the appointments of the Law, and upon an exact compliance with which the validity of the legal rites was suspended. Had Christ intended the sacraments to be ordinances the same in kind as those of the Levitical worship, He would have delivered them accompanied with a liturgical ceremonial; He would have multiplied the details of the ritual; and He would have committed the administration of them to a priestly caste, in whose hands alone they should possess a covenanted validity. All this, we know, Christ actually is said to have done,* but not on the authority of the Christian Scriptures. To His Church, represented

* "Itaque tradendum est solis sacerdotibus potestatem datam esse ut sacram eucharistiam conficiant ac fidelibus distribuant." — Cat. Trid. p. 2. cap. 4. s. 72.

in the Apostles, He delivered the sacraments.* Believers are to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; baptized Christians are to eat the bread and drink the cup, and thus to feed spiritually upon His body and blood. These simple directions comprise all the particulars of the original institution. Who the proper persons are to administer the ordinances; with what accompanying ceremonial; whether the elements are to be consecrated, and, if so, with what form of words;—for a determination of these points we search the record in vain. Nor is the omission supplied by His Apostles. Where, in the New Testament, do we find any prescribed form of consecration apart from which the Eucharist is to be deemed inefficacious? We are not, of course, speaking of what the law of *order* may require, or render ultimately necessary, but of what is divinely prescribed upon the subject. No such prescription is found in the inspired writings. In a later age, indeed, eucharistic liturgies—in like manner as canons regulating matters of ecclesiastical polity—are found ascribed to the Apostles; both being the productions of an age in which the Christian Church was fast sinking into a legal system, in all essential respects resembling that of Moses.

If we suppose the direction of Christ, Matt. xviii. 15—19., to have a reference to church discipline, what has been said concerning the sacraments applies equally to this latter appointment. For in conferring the power of excommunication, not upon the pastors of the Church only, but upon the whole body, consisting of both pastors and people, our Lord merely turned to a Christian use the well-known existing practice of synagogical excommunication, of which such frequent mention is made in the New Testament.† His allusions would at once explain themselves to a Jew: the very terms He made use of—binding and loosing—were derived from the practice of the synagogue.

But in the next place, and principally:—the place which the Christian sacraments occupy in reference to the implantation and maintenance of the new life in Christ, is such as essentially to distinguish them from the institutions of a system, the characteristic of which is to work upon man from without inwards. For what is the principle or rationale of their spiritual operation? Not, in

* Matt. xxviii. 19. Οὐ μετ' ἐκείνων δὲ μόνον εἶπεν ἔσεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ μετὰ παντῶν τῶν μετ' ἐκείνους πιστευόντων· οὐ γὰρ δὴ ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος οἱ ἀπόστολοι μενεῖν ἔμελλον. ἀλλ' ὡς ἐνὶ σώματι διαλέγεται τοῖς πιστοῖς.—Chrys. in loc.

† See John, ix. 22., xvi. 2., xii, 4.; Luke, vi. 22. Also, Vitringa De Syn. Vet. lib. iii. p. I. c. 9.

the first instance, to communicate spiritual life, but to be signs and seals of it, when, by other instruments, called into being: to preserve, nourish, and perfect it, when already in existence. According to the terms of the original institution, neither of these ordinances — Baptism and the Lord's Supper — was to be administered save to those concerning whom the presumption might be cherished that they had living faith in Christ, and were partakers of His Spirit. (Exceptional cases, in which it may be supposed lawful to deviate from the rule are for the present left out of view.) "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved:" this is the divinely established relation between the new life and its visible sign; which, it is needless to say, belongs equally to the other sacrament. As to discipline, it is to be administered by the Church,— *i. e.* a congregation of faithful men, men presumed to have saving faith in Christ. True it is, that in after ages the Church took upon herself to dispense with the internal preparation of the heart, teaching that the sacraments are effectual, *ex opere operato*, and impress a spiritual character, *sine bono motu utentis*, or irrespectively of the moral state of the recipient; but she did so without the warrant, nay contrary to the plainest declarations, of Scripture. Had this been the intended place of the sacraments in the order of salvation, Christ would have instituted them at the threshold of His ministry; but He did not do so. First (and in reference to the point under discussion the fact is of great significance,) He attached, by the secret operation of His grace, the twelve to His person; He walked with them, taught them, instituted a living communion between them and Himself, and gave them faith to perceive that He was the Son of God; and then, when, by His personal intercourse and instructions, He had brought them to some ripeness of religious knowledge, He delivered to them the pledge and seal of their fellowship with Him and with each other. The *place* which the institution of the sacraments occupies in our Lord's ministry is quite in accordance with the doctrinal statements of Scripture respecting their mode of operation; the sum of which statements is, that the Word received in faith must prepare the way for the right reception of the ordinance.

But the subject here touched upon is so important in itself, and so closely connected with the differences of view under discussion, that it deserves to be considered more at large. No one can have studied with attention the controversial works of Romish theologians — or of those who adopt, in substance, the Romish theory — without perceiving that one of the chief doctrinal grounds on

which their view of the Church rests, is what has been called, in modern times, sometimes the sacramental system, and sometimes the theory of the corporate life; for the thing signified by these expressions is one and the same. The fundamental idea which both are intended to convey is, that spiritual life is derived to the individual, in the first instance, not from union with Christ, but from union with the visible church: life coming directly from the branches, and only mediately from the vine. Sometimes indeed language is used from which it might seem that by the expression corporate life more than this is meant; that under it there lurks an indistinct idea of the Church's being, apart from the individuals of which it is composed, a moral person standing to Christians in the same relation in which a mother does to her children.* Strange as this personification of an abstraction may appear when nakedly propounded, it has proved, in skilful hands, an instrument of immense power; as every page of Church history testifies. To the Church Christians owe their spiritual birth; the Church educates her children; decides for them in doubtful cases; nourishes them with her ordinances; prays for them; and, if need be, corrects them:—admitting that there is a sense in which all this holds good, we have only to recollect the practical use which was made of the idea by the Church of the middle ages, to be convinced of the danger of incautious language on sacred subjects. That no such thing exists as the Church, considered as an abstract personality, performing acts of thought and will distinct from those of the individual members who compose the body, it is needless to remark. So convenient, however, was

* "The individual in his closet addresses the Saviour; and precious is the privilege of his perpetual access to his Lord; but more elevated still is the public worship, because, as an individual, he stands in a lower position than that which belongs to him in the Church as a part of her incorporate life." (Is it meant that the change of *place* from the closet to the public assembly alters the individual's standing in God's sight? Is he only a member of the Church when engaged in social worship?) "He is not, as an individual, so assured of his being wedded to Christ, as is the church of her mystical and indissoluble relations with Him; and she acts upon this, not supposition merely, but moral certainty of His favour, and of vital union with Him . . . . . with a degree of confidence which for the body is safe, but for the individual is intoxicating."—Gladstone's Church Principles, &c. p. 130. The mode of speaking of the Church, of which this passage is an illustration, and which has its root in the natural realism of the human mind, is of very ancient date: "Cum autem nativitas Christianorum in baptismo sit, baptismi autem generatio et sanctificatio apud solam sponsam Christi sit, quæ parere spiritualiter et generare filios Deo possit, ubi et ex qua et cui natus est qui filius ecclesiæ non est, ut habere quis Deum Patrem ante ecclesiam matrem." — Cyp. Epist. 74. Ad Pomp. So Augustin:—"Ecclesia quippe omnes per baptismum parit, sive apud se, id est, ex utero suo, sive extra se de semine viri sui."—De Bap. cont Don. l. i. s. 23., and in numberless other passages.

the fiction found in defending or concealing the flaws of the Church system, that theologians were unwilling to discover that it was a fiction; and to this day, nothing is more common than the employment of it to avoid a difficulty or to silence an objection. Putting aside, however, this application of the term corporate life, there remains to be considered the other notion involved in the expression, which is, that the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, which makes a man a member of Christ, is, in the first instance, derived from visible — that is, sacramental — union with the Church, the latter being in itself a depository of grace; that communion with the Head is to be attained through visible communion with the body; that the way to Christ lies through the ordinances of the Church.

Let this dogma be combined with that of the efficacy of the Sacraments *ex opere operato*, and from the combination, the Romish conception of the Church will follow in the way of strict logical sequence. If sacramental union with the Church is the commencement of our union with Christ; and, at the same time, to all who interpose no positive bar (*non ponentibus obicem, — i. e.*, as the schoolmen explain it, not living in mortal sin,) the grace of the Sacraments, by the mere act of reception, is imparted, it being a matter of indifference whether or not the recipients possess the positive qualifications of repentance and faith; it is obvious that the Church is no longer, according to the idea, a community of true believers, but must be defined by its visible characteristics, as an institution in which Sacraments are administered and received. Union with Christ, as all admit, involves the blessings of justification and adoption: if, then, the appointed way to union with Christ lies through sacramental union with the Church, and nothing resembling what Protestants call faith is required for sacramental union with the Church, it follows that the justification and adoption thus attained are merely external relations, perfectly separable from internal sanctification by the Spirit, and that a man may be called a member of Christ who has no saving faith in Christ; that is, in other words, that the Church, in its idea, comprehends both those who are and those who are not led by the Spirit of God. According to this system, the blessings which flow from incorporation in Christ are bestowed upon all, however destitute they may be of sanctifying faith, who partake of the sacraments and sacramental ordinances; the Church being the interposed medium through which lies access to the Saviour. It is true that Romanists, as well as Protestants, teach that to salvation something more than this is

necessary; but the sanctifying work of the Spirit with which salvation is connected is, on the Romish hypothesis, subsequent, in point of time, to incorporation in the Church, and, therefore, to incorporation in Christ; and not only subsequent in time, but separable in idea: so that to be a member of Christ's body, or of Christ, by no means necessarily implies the being in a state of salvation. Hence it is but natural that the conception which Romanists entertain of the Church should be, that it is a visible institution, provided with a complete apparatus of machinery for the rectification of fallen human nature; an institution into which men are gathered promiscuously, in order that they may be brought under a course of spiritual discipline, which, if they are not wanting to themselves, will issue in their salvation. With some the course prescribed succeeds, and the end is attained; in other instances it fails; but whatever be the spiritual condition of those who belong to it, the institution itself remains the same,—pure, infallible, and indefectible. The first sacrament of incorporation—baptism—unites man to Christ's mystical body,—that is, to Christ Himself; conferring upon them not increase of sanctifying, but sacramental, grace, or a spiritual capacity for performing holy actions (*e. g.* receiving the other sacraments), which spiritual capacity, however, is in itself a morally indifferent thing,—a mere power, which may be turned to good or to evil:* confirmation arms the Christian soldier for the spiritual warfare: in the Eucharist—working still *ex opere operato*—he feeds upon the body of Christ: penance restores him when fallen: extreme

* That the "baptismal regeneration" of Romanism contains nothing *moral* in it lies on the face of the Tridentine formularies; but it is worthy of remark, as illustrating the natural result of a certain well-known type of doctrine, that in the sermons of a distinguished convert to the Church of Rome, composed previously to his conversion, precisely the same neutral character is (potentially at least) attached to the spiritual effect of baptism. "Regeneration, I say, is a new birth, or the giving of a new nature. Now, let it be observed, there is nothing impossible in the thing itself (though we believe it is not so), but nothing impossible in the very notion of a regeneration being accorded even to impenitent sinners. I do not say regeneration in its fulness, for that includes in it perfect happiness and holiness, to which it tends from the first; yet regeneration in a true and sufficient sense, in its primary qualities. For the essencé of regeneration is the communication of a higher and diviner nature; and sinners may have this gift, though it would be a curse to them, not a blessing. The devils (!) have a nature thus higher and more divine than man, yet they are not preserved thereby from evil." — Newman's Sermons, vol. iii. serm. 16. Repulsive as such a view of regeneration is to the biblical Christian, it must be remembered that it is only the ultimate result of the dogma that regeneration can be present in an adult where there is no rectification of the will, or, in common language, change of heart. In Tridentine Romanism the revolting aspect of the theory is, in some measure, disguised by its dogma of the "impressed character," which in baptism is defined to be merely a passive spiritual power of receiving the Sacraments and other benefits of the Church.—See Ballarm. De Effect. Sac. c. 19.

unction dismisses him with the Church's passport to heaven:—such (the argument runs) are the means divinely appointed for the purpose of making individuals partakers of the benefits of Christ's passion and resurrection. And what is required in order to ensure their due operation? Nothing but that the recipient place no positive hindrance in the way, and perform the prescribed act. Most consistently does the Church of Rome teach that a state of bliss follows not at once upon the Christian's dying in the Lord,—that is, in communion with His body, the Church; and provides a place of purgatorial cleansing, where the moral change, apart from which a man might here be a member of Christ, but confessedly cannot enter heaven, may be effected.

On the insurmountable difficulties under which these statements labour,—as, for instance, the difficulty of conceiving how he can be, in any proper sense of the words, a member of Christ, who is not a partaker of the Holy Spirit's sanctifying influences, it is needless, and would be here out of place, to enlarge; but the πρῶτον ψεῦδος, or fundamental error, of the whole theory, deserves our particular notice. In order to perceive clearly what it is, it will be necessary to enter a little more fully into the subject of the Christian's union with Christ; to present a true view of which, is the professed object of the modern advocates of the sacramental system.

So far as the maintainers of that system insist upon union with Christ, the glorified Redeemer, as one of the facts peculiar to the new dispensation, they take up a true position.

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In considering the characteristics of our Lord's teaching, it was

intimated that other peculiarities of it, besides those mentioned, remained to be noticed; and, in fact, the great distinctive feature of it is the enunciation of the truth of which we are now speaking, — viz. that in Himself — God manifest in the flesh, the second Adam — is life eternal, and that, to become partakers of that life, we must be brought into union with Him, "Abide in me and I in you;" "whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life abiding in him, and I will raise him up at the last day:"* — whatever be meant by such expressions as these, they, as presupposing the incarnation of Christ, obviously contain a new idea, to which nothing is found in the Old Testament exactly corresponding. The union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ was, in fact, the commencement of a new order of things, both in heaven and upon earth: then a new head — a second Adam — appeared amidst the ruins of humanity, by union with whom sinful man is to be brought into fellowship with God, and attain a higher state of dignity and privilege than that in which he was originally created. Union with Christ is the distinctive blessing of the Gospel dispensation, in which every other is comprised — justification, sanctification, adoption, and the future glorifying of our bodies: all these are but different aspects of the one great truth, that the Christian is one with Christ.

In our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, we have the first intimation of this great mystery of the Gospel dispensation. When Christ declared to the Jewish rabbi that, "unless a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God,"† he delivered a truth partly old and partly new; or rather, a truth one aspect of which had a reference to the ancient, the other to the Christian, dispensation. For, notwithstanding the dictum of Hooker, and the general consent of the fathers in the literal interpretation of the passage, we may well doubt whether it contains a direct reference to baptism, as a ritual ordinance of Christianity. How could Nicodemus be blamed for not understanding the nature of a Christian Sacrament, when the latter had not been instituted, nor the redemption which it was intended to symbolize, and apply, accomplished? What Nicodemus, as a master of Israel, ought to have known was what he could gather from the Old Testament writings; and by the degree of religious illumination which they were calculated to impart, we must judge of our Lord's meaning. Now the Jewish scriptures contain no instruction upon the Christian Sacraments; but they do inculcate, in numerous

* John, vi. 54. † John, iii. 5.

passages, the necessity of a great moral change, symbolized by the cleansing effect of water, and they connect with the coming of Messiah a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in the first instance upon the house of Israel, and then upon the Gentiles.* In not recollecting such passages as these, Nicodemus merited the rebuke, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Thus far, the prophets had prepared the way for the Gospel. But, in the whole expression, "born of water and of the spirit," an idea was involved, which Nicodemus never could have gathered from a perusal of the Old Testament alone,—the idea of Christian regeneration, as distinguished from the same thing under the law. Christian regeneration is the first incorporation of the believer in Christ: and the true idea of it is such a union with the Son of God, in His glorified human nature, as confers upon the believer the like privilege of sonship. Christians are Christ's brethren; "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ;"† sons of God through adoption and grace; their bodies, as well as souls and spirits, being taken up into spiritual union with Christ, in order that in due time they may be made like unto His. This is a real new birth; for it is a transplanting out of the old Adam, not merely into a new *moral* condition, but into the second Adam —the man Christ Jesus—the glorified Head of a new race of spiritual sons of God. And the vital power which effects the incorporation is that special efflux of the Holy Spirit which was withheld until Christ was glorified, and which, in order to distinguish it from the spiritual influences vouchsafed under the law, may, with the utmost propriety, be called the regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost.

The aspect which regeneration assumes in the Old Testament is merely that of a moral change, or, as it is commonly called, a change of heart, the *μετάνοια* of John the Baptist. In this sense which no doubt is the most important one, regeneration must have existed equally under the Law and under the Gospel; for it is with a moral change, or new heart, that salvation is connected, and salvation belonged to the pious Jew not less than to the Christian. But in its positive aspect, as denoting the privilege of sonship, through incorporation in Christ, it did not form part of the Jewish revelation. True it is that we occasionally find the nation, as distinguished from the heathen world, spoken of as collectively enjoying the privilege of adoption—as in the passage, "Israel is

* Is. i. 16.; Jer. iv. 14.; Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.; Zech. xiii. 1.
† Rom. viii. 17.

my son, my first-born" (Exodus, iv. 22.); but the privilege of the nation in this point was, like the nation itself, but a type, a shadow, of the reality which was to come: the notion of an individual regeneration by the Spirit, whereby the individual is enabled to cry Abba, Father, the Spirit bearing witness with His spirit that he is a child of God, does not appear in any part of the Jewish Scriptures.* When Christ, therefore, enunciated the great truth that, "unless a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God," He alluded to a special prerogative of the Christian dispensation, — a special gift derived from His heavenly life at the right hand of God. That gift is, the (in the strict sense of the word) regenerating influence of the Spirit, which, with creative energy, must transform the penitent disciple of the law into a member of Christ, before he could "see the kingdom of God," — *i. e.* belong to the Christian dispensation. To the "water" — the preparatory repentance and contrition produced by the discipline of the law, and symbolized by John's baptism, hence called the baptism of water unto repentance — there is superadded, under the Christian dispensation, the "spirit," or a participation of Christ's own heavenly life, flowing from union with Him, — the effect of the indwelling of His Spirit; in the combination of which two elements of the life in Christ — the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new — lies the peculiarity of Christian regeneration, as distinguished from the same thing under the law.

Had the change which the incarnation of Christ produced in the spiritual standing of believers been borne in mind, it would have been seen that the reply to be given to the question, "Can believers before Christ be said to have been regenerate?" turns entirely upon the meaning which is attached to the word regeneration. If we use it to signify the great moral change which must take place in every son of Adam before he can enjoy fellowship with God, then, unquestionably, the ancient believers were regenerate: but, if the word be taken in its properly Christian acceptation, as denoting incorporation in the glorified Redeemer, they were not, for they could not be, in this sense, regenerate. They were morally, but not mystically, regenerate; they were believers in the promised Messiah, but they were not, "in Christ," in the New Testament sense of that expression. Doctrinal prepossessions have in this, as in other instances, prevented a due

* By the Rabbins a proselyte was called בְּרִיָּה חֲדָשָׁה, "a new creature;" but the expression seems to have denoted merely the outward change which ensued on the profession of Judaism. See Olshausen on John, iii. 3.

recognition of the difference between the spiritual standing of a Christian and that of a believer under the law; but there is nothing extraordinary in the supposition, that, as the explicit revelation of the doctrines of the Gospel was reserved for Christ and His apostles, so a special spiritual blessing is attached to the dispensation which the Saviour came to introduce.

The same remarks apply to those passages in which our Lord speaks of the maintenance of the Christian life when once begun. As mystical incorporation in Him constitutes the essential idea of the new birth, so, by abiding in spiritual union with Christ, the Christian lives, and advances to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The union with Christ must be not only begun, but maintained and strengthened. Hence such expressions as "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in Him," which, at the least, must mean that the maintenance of the new life depends upon the continual communication, not merely of Christ's spirit, but of Christ himself (spiritually) to the soul. No wonder that an idea so new, and to the Jew especially, commanded, as he was, to abstain from blood, so repulsive, should have proved a stumbling-block to those who did not understand that the words which Christ spake were spirit and were life.

That our Lord intended, in either of these remarkable passages, a direct reference to the Christian Sacraments to be afterwards instituted, is, as has been remarked, not probable; but it is going too far in the opposite direction to maintain that they do not contain even an indirect allusion to baptism and the Lord's Supper. For baptism, worthily received, is, in fact, nothing less than a being buried with Christ, and rising with Him to a new life;* and in the other Sacrament the believer enjoys the communion of the body and of the blood of Christ.† To the extent in which the Sacraments are symbolical, and effective, of union with Christ, no language could more accurately express the idea to be connected with each, respectively, than that used by our Lord, as recorded by St. John.

Thus far, no difference of opinion — at least no essential one — will, it is probable, be found to exist among those who assign its full weight to the specific language of the New Testament; but it is far otherwise when we come to the question (an entirely distinct one), what place do the *sacraments* hold in the process of uniting men to Christ? Here it is that the divergency of the sacramental

* Rom. vi. 4. † 1 Cor. x. 16.

system from the teaching of Scripture becomes apparent. That system, as recently expounded by one of its advocates, rests upon two assumptions, neither of which will stand the test of inquiry;—the first is, that Christ is present with men, in His Church, or mystical body, the latter expression being interpreted to mean the aggregate of visible Churches in the world; and, secondly, that the Sacraments are the first instruments of union with Christ, and with Christ's body.* Upon the first point little need here be said, as it is only indirectly connected with the question before us; meanwhile, it may be observed that, stripped of ambiguous language, the idea is precisely that which Romanists intend to express, when they affirm that the Church is the perpetual incarnation of Christ upon earth. To say that Christ is present with us in and through the visible Church is, obviously, to make the Church to individuals the vicar and representative of Christ upon earth; and it is but taking one step further in the same direction to make the Church Christ himself. Such, in fact, is, in Romanism, the aspect under which the Church presents itself to the faithful. Instead of being present in His word and by His spirit, and offering Himself as the direct means of access, on the sinner's part, to God, Christ is held to have retired from the personal administration of the kingdom of God, and to have delegated His powers — royal, priestly, and prophetical — to the visible Church (*i. e.* the clergy), commanding all men to regard it as they would have regarded Him had He been still amongst them in His human nature. In this one dogma, the whole of the Romish system, doctrinal and practical, is virtually contained. The visible Church assumes the character of a mediator between man and God; becomes, in itself, a depository of grace, a life-giving body, as it is sometimes called; and, in order to gain access to Christ, and through Christ to God, individuals must first be joined to the Church by visible, that is, sacramental, union.

The attentive reader of the New Testament will not have failed to perceive the errors of scriptural interpretation upon which the whole theory is based; as, for example, that the body of Christ means the aggregate of visible Churches in the world, and that the Church is so called on account of its connexion with the glorified manhood of our Lord. The Church is never called the body of Christ, as being His diffused manhood, but as standing in the same relation to Him in which the human body stands to the head, a

* See Wilberforce, Doctrine of the Incarnation, cc. 11 and 13.

relation of dependence and vital union. The very passages which the sacramentalist quotes in favour of his view, prove that it is not a correct one;* for when Christ is said to be "the Head from which all the body by joints and bands" has "nourishment ministered," the idea, obviously, is not that the Church is Christ's manhood upon earth, but that from Him she derives spiritual life and strength. Nor, again, is it necessary, if it were here the place, to dwell upon the endless embarrassments in which they who adopt this view of the Church, and yet stop short of fully developed Romanism, are involved, when required to explain how a number of independent Churches, which may or may not be in communion with each other, can represent the manhood of Christ, which evidently involves the idea, not of internal union merely, but of external unity under a visible head; or to propound tests by which we are to discover which visible Churches are, and which are not, a portion of Christ's diffused manhood. From these embarrassments, and a thousand others of a similar kind, the Romanist is saved by his doctrine of the papacy; and, in fact, none but a Romanist can plausibly maintain, or carry out to its legitimate results, the dogma that the visible Church is the perpetual incarnation, or manhood, of Christ upon earth. What now particularly demands our attention is the second assumption above mentioned, — viz. that the Sacraments are the instruments by which the commencement of the Christian's union with Christ, and with Christ's body, is effected. This is the radical error above alluded to, upon which it was proposed to make some remarks.

Let it be granted that to be in Christ and to be in the body of Christ are things inseparable; the question still remains, what is the external instrument of our first union with either? Scripture, with one accord, declares that not to the sacraments, but to the Word of God, that office belongs, — the office of initiating the Christian's union with Christ. For the living faith which is required for the worthy reception of the sacraments, and without which they work no saving effect, comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. The substance of the Apostolic teaching upon this point is, that that part of regeneration which is moral — that is, which consists in repentance and faith — must precede that which is mystical; or, rather, that it is, under the Gospel, a constituent element of mystical incorporation in Christ. The very place which Christianity holds in the progressive revelation of

* See Wilberforce, &c., p. 314.

God is illustrative of this truth; for, historically, the ancient people of God were made to pass under the discipline of the law, convincing them of sin, and awakening in them a longing for redemption, before the full blessing of a union with Christ was proposed to their acceptance. The regenerating spirit was to brood, not upon the torpid surface of heathenism, but upon a people prepared for the Lord. So it was as regards individuals in every instance of conversion recorded in Scripture. The Law and the promise, as of old, were necessary to prepare the heart for the reception of Christ: the union with Christ which is effected by faith invariably preceded that which is effected by the sacraments. They who on the day of Pentecost "gladly received the word" of Peter, promising them, on repentance, remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost,—that is, who repented and believed—"were baptised." This was the established order according to which "the Lord added to the Church such as should be saved." * They were added thereto, not that they might be, but because they had been previously, led to repent and believe; visible incorporation in the Church being the last, not the first, step in the order of salvation: they were σωζόμενοι, or in a state of salvation, previously to their being added to the Church, because repentance and faith, or a change of heart, is the essential element of salvation, the only one which the pious Jew possessed before Christ came. The passage, indeed, teaches us that those whom the Lord designs to save, He will, ordinarily, add visibly to His Church: but not that salvation is the consequence of such union. To the question of the eunuch, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" the reply was, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." But it is unnecessary to multiply particular instances in proof of a conclusion which is at once and directly established by the tenor of the Apostles' preaching. Had the order of salvation been in their view what the sacramentalist would have it to be, they would, in exhorting men to save themselves from the wrath to come, have directed them, in the first instance, and before anything else, to the Church, as the divinely appointed institution through sacramental union with which they were to be brought within the influence of Christ's saving power. But the course which they followed was altogether different: Christ Himself—the risen and exalted Saviour, and not the Church of Christ—was the object which they placed in the fore-

* Acts, ii. 47.

ground of their ministry, and to which the inquirer was, without the intervention of anything else, directed. To the question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" the apostolic reply was not, "Join thyself to the Church, through which thou shalt attain to Christ, and through Christ to God," but "Believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* Whatever else might be necessary to perfect the Christian's union with Christ, the first step towards salvation was ever, according to the apostolic teaching, a direct application, upon the sinner's part, not to Christ's diffused manhood, the visible Church, but to Christ Himself at the right hand of God. To sum up:—no passage can be cited from the New Testament, in which the expression "in Christ" may not be shown necessarily to presuppose repentance and faith, or a change of heart; which change is supposed to have been wrought through the instrumentality of the Word, previously to visible union with the Church. Even a branch which now appears to be dead, must once have had life; otherwise it could never have been a branch: a piece of withered wood fastened by external ligatures to a living trunk is not, and never has been, a branch of that tree.† "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power" (ἐξουσία, the right, or privilege), "to become sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."‡

But here possibly the objection will be made, that if to the Word and its correlative—Faith—we assign the first place in the process of uniting men to Christ, we cannot deny the privilege of union with Christ to the pious Jew, for He too had repentance, and exercised faith in the divine promise. We reply that, under the Christian dispensation, the ordinance of the ministry of the

* Acts, xvi. 30, 31.

† The passage alluded to (John, xv. 2.) is sometimes cited, as proving that the expression "in Christ" may denote a mere external relation towards Him; such, for example, as belongs to all the members of a visible Church, whatever they may be in the sight of God: but it appears to warrant no such conclusion. There is no ground, in the immediate context, or in the chapter, for the supposition that the fruitless branch means a mere nominal professor, who has never been in living union with Christ. How could such a person be termed a branch at all? Our Lord speaks of both branches—the fruitful and the fruitless—as being, or having been, in Himself; and, for aught that appears to the contrary, in the same sense: and indeed it is obvious that a fruitless, or even a dead, branch must once have derived life from the vine. The truth which apparently is taught us in the passage is, not that there are two ways of being in Christ, but that it is possible to have vital union with Him, and yet not to abide in that state, to fall from it, and finally to be cut off from Christ: in other words, that true faith is not always indefectible. In this point of view, the passage may seem to favour Augustine's distinction between the regenerate and the elect, or between those who have, and those who have not, the gift of perseverance.

‡ John, i. 12.

Word possesses a sacramental character, which did not belong to it under the old; an important fact, which is constantly overlooked or kept out of view by the maintainers of the sacramental system. It has been already remarked that, in strictness of language, no such ordinance as the ministry of the Word existed under the Law. How could it indeed have existed when there was no completed redemption to announce? But we have further to observe that, under the Christian dispensation, this ordinance not only is a chief means of grace, but possesses a real sacramental character, an inward grace being connected with the outward vehicle, and the effect of it being both to initiate and maintain the believer's union with Christ. This rests upon most certain testimony of Holy Scripture. Is Baptism spoken of as a means of our incorporation in Christ, or regeneration? So is the Word, and even more explicitly. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;" "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."* Besides direct passages of this kind, there are others which indirectly express the same truth; as, for example, when St. Paul says, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;"† for the Word is the external instrument by which faith is produced in the heart. Is the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood spoken of as a means of strengthening the new life in Christ? So is the Word: "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby."‡ The ministry of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, by which the saints are to be perfected, and the body of Christ edified, is, as all the names import, a ministry of the Word.§ Hence is to be explained the remarkable circumstance, which no doubt has been observed by the reader, that, in speaking of the Word of Christ, the inspired writers often pass on to Christ Himself, and employ the two terms interchangeably. St. Paul calls the Corinthians "an epistle of Christ ministered" by him;‖ and in another epistle, if the writer begins a passage with describing the Word of God as "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," he, as he proceeds, appears to identify it with Christ Himself, affirming that it "is a discoverer of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" and that "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."¶ The interchange of terms is remarkable,

* Jas. i. 18.: 1 Pet. i. 23.
† Gal. iii. 26.
‡ 1 Pet. ii. 2.
§ Ephes. iv. 11, 12.
‖ 2 Cor. iii. 3.
¶ Heb. iv. 12, 13.

but easily explained, when we recollect the sacramental character of the ministration of the word: for in truth, wherever Christ is preached, Christ Himself is ministered to the souls of the faithful, as really as when He imparts Himself in Baptism, or in the Supper of the Lord.

And as the Word is a sacramental means of grace, preparing the way for the Sacraments properly so called, so the faith which comes by hearing is no natural exercise of the understanding, but a gift of the Holy Ghost working with the Word. As the sacramentalist deposes the Word from its proper place in the economy of grace, so he regards every mode of access to God, save that which is by the Sacraments, as belonging to the province of mere natural reason, and subversive of the scheme of mediatorship, which is rightly described as the leading idea of the Gospel. There cannot be a more erroneous supposition, or a more striking proof of the apparent inability of the advocates of this system, any more than Romanists, to understand the Protestant and Scriptural idea of justifying faith. If the faith which comes by hearing, and which, according to the order of things declared in Scripture, initiates the believer's union with Christ, were a mere thinking upon Christ, as it has been called, or a mere belief of the doctrines of Christianity, it might plausibly be described as a product of unassisted reason, a natural mode of intercourse between the spirit of man and the Divine Spirit. But the faith which is the result of the Holy Spirit's working with the Word is not a mere thought, a mere belief, of this kind: it is an internal apprehension of Christ, a trust in Him as the only Saviour, and, as such, is nothing less than a gift of God, a supernatural mode of access to Him. For it is founded upon conviction of sin; and the preliminary work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of man is, according to our Lord's own statement, conviction of sin.* The faith, therefore, of the eunuch, or of Lydia, which was kindled in their hearts by the preaching of Philip and St. Paul, and which they possessed before baptism, was no natural mean of connexion with God: it was the inward grace sacramentally attached to the Word, and, as such, was just as much a special grace of the Holy Spirit as that which they subsequently received in baptism and in the Lord's Supper. In fact, St. Paul affirms, that to produce saving faith in the heart of man requires as mighty an exercise of the divine power as that which took place when Christ rose from the dead.† Nor did their

* John, xvi. 9. † Ephes. i. 19, 20.

faith fix itself at once upon God, — the infinite Spirit, — dispensing with Christ the mediator, but upon Christ Himself, and through Christ upon God; and in this, their spiritual apprehension of Christ, antecedently to their reception of the Sacraments, they were brought into union with Him, initially, if not perfectly. Indeed, even in the reception of the Sacraments, does not that faith, the existence of which they presuppose, and without which they are lifeless ordinances, ascend directly to Christ mediating in heaven between man and God? Or are we to regard the Sacraments as Christ himself present amongst us? Such really appears to be the ultimate and legitimate conclusion to which the sacramental system leads.

But, not to dwell any longer upon the numerous errors and fallacies which pervade the whole theory, it is clear, from what has been said, that, if the recorded cases of Scripture are to decide the point, the first accession of spiritual life to the soul does not come from visible union with the Church. If a penitent believer cannot, as such merely, be pronounced to be in full union with Christ, he has unquestionably received life from above, and that through the external means of the Word; nor can the Church introduce him, in the first instance, who has already come, to Christ: for he that believes upon Christ has come to Christ. In every recorded instance, he who worthily came to baptism, had previously come to Christ, and was baptized on the supposition of his having previously so come: so that, although he who is in Christ must also be in Christ's body, the order of salvation, as laid down in Scripturs, is that we attain union with the body through direct union with the Head, not *vice versâ*. The case is the same here as in the connexion between faith and works: the two are inseparable, yet it is not the same thing to say that faith springs from works, as to say that works spring from faith. So, in the present instance; — it is by no means an indifferent thing whether we say that men attain to union with Christ through union with the Church, or attain to union with the Church through union with Christ. If by the Church be meant the visible community of professing Christians, the difference of statement just mentioned involves, as Schleiermacher remarks,* nothing less than the whole of the controversy on this subject between Romanists and Protestants. For union with the Church in its visible aspect takes place by means of the Sacraments; if, therefore, this be the appointed way of

* Der Christliche Glaube, Vierte Ausgabe, p. 132.

access to Christ, and so to God, it is obvious that Christianity becomes, as Rome would have it to be, a religion of Sacraments; and Christ, instead of being held forth as the immediate object of faith, — the mediator through whom we directly draw nigh to God, — becomes hidden behind the veil of his own ordinances, the Church taking His place as "the way, the truth, and the life." Thus, too, faith is made to derive its value and efficacy, not from the object upon which it fixes, but from the position of him who exercises it, according as he is within, or without, the pale of the visible Church; the faith which precedes Baptism having no covenanted virtue with God:* an error akin to that of Augustin, who strenuously maintains that what seems to be Christian love in those who are not in communion with the visible Church is not so in reality, for that true charity *cannot* exist save within the one sacred inclosure.† So far is this view from being correct, that the very reverse is that which we gather from Scripture; according to which, instead of the Sacraments giving power and efficacy to faith, it is faith which makes the Sacraments efficacious, and imparts a Christian character to the whole of the religious life.

We can hardly regard it as accidental that the Word, not the Sacraments, should be the external means of initiating the Christian's union with Christ. May we not, in fact, conclude, that this order of things was purposely established, in order to obviate the possibility of our investing the visible Church with a sacramental character, as if it was in itself a depository of grace, and possessed the privilege of spiritually quickening those admitted by sacramental ordinances to its pale? For thus, the first accession of spiritual life is altogether disconnected from incorporation in the visible Church, that faith, which the Spirit, working by means of the Word, produces, obviously not, of itself, incorporating the believer in any visible Christian society. An appointment which is in perfect harmony with the teaching of Scripture concerning the absence of any external law controlling the quickening influences of the Spirit. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit;"‡ "Of his own will begat he us;"§

* "The profit of all other means of grace depends on that right of access to God which Christ the mediator has dispensed. But the purpose of sacraments is to bind us to Him on whom this right of access is dependent. . . . . So that sacraments differ from all other means of grace, in that, whereas other things result from union with Christ, they, on the contrary, conduct to it." — Wilberforce, Doctrine of the Incarnation, &c. p. 411.

† De Bap. cont. Don. l. 3. s. 21. See also l. 1. s. 11.

‡ John, iii. 8. § Jas. i. 14.

"Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God:"*—how difficult is it to assign to these, and the numerous other passages of like import, their full meaning, if it be so, that the moment of incorporation in the visible Church is also necessarily the moment of the first communication of spiritual life to the soul. For, manifestly, nothing is more cognizable by man, nothing more definitely fixed in point of time, than the act of such incorporation. On the other hand, all becomes intelligible, if we are to regard the Word of God as the first instrument whereby souls are brought to Christ; for no one can tell in what particular cases, or at what particular times, the Word will become effectual, through grace, to the spiritual quickening of those to whom it is preached.

And yet, in denying to the Church the power to communicate spiritual life, as from herself, we by no means do away with the intervention of the Church in the work of bringing souls to God. For if it is the Word which is the instrument of that preliminary operation of grace which prepares the way for baptism, yet to the Church the custody and preaching of the Word are committed: her office it is to perpetuate the Apostles' testimony concerning Christ. Hence the manner in which the question is put by a modern defender of the sacramental system is captious, as well as ambiguous. "Is the Church a means to an end, or is it a separable consequence of that end which may be otherwise effected? Are we, by means of the Church, made partakers of Christ; or, being otherwise made partakers of Christ, are we, as it may be or not, made partakers of baptism?"† We reply that it is always by means of the Church that men are made partakers of Christ; not, however, through union with herself, but by her holding forth her Lord to their acceptance. The Church preaches Christ, and the Word, received in faith, initiates the believer's union with Christ: the Church, too, administers the Sacraments, and the worthy reception of them seals and perfects the believer's union with Christ. But, in both cases, the Church's office is ministerial only: to her the administration of the means of grace is committed, but she has no power to make them effectual to salvation; for this prerogative belongs to Him only who both has life in Himself, and has power to communicate of His life to those who believe upon Him. Again, it is not left to the discretion of the believer whether or not he shall receive baptism; for it is Christ's command that he be bap-

* John, i. 13.

† Manning, Unity, &c. p. 281.

tized; and yet baptism is not, if the cases recorded in Scripture are to rule the point, the first instrument whereby men are made partakers of Christ.

Into the exceptional case of Infants, born within the pale of the Church, it does not seem necessary to enter. Independently of the scantiness of the materials which either Scripture or Church History furnishes for our deciding positively on the origin or effects of Infant baptism, it is enough to observe that this case is an exceptional one, and that in our dogmatical conclusions we must be guided by the cases actually recorded in Holy Scriptures. Besides, it must be remembered that nothing less will satisfy the logical requirements of the Sacramental theory than that the first accession of spiritual life should in *all* cases, that of adults as well as infants, be conveyed through the Sacrament; that this should be the *law* of the Gospel; and therefore to refute that theory it is only necessary that we be able, as we are, to show that in the instances of baptism recorded in Scripture, this was not the order of things. Under no circumstances, then, can it claim to be considered the universal law of Christianity that baptism is the first instrument of living union with Christ.

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It only remains, on this head, to observe that, as the Romish conception of the Church springs, by necessary consequence, from the two dogmas, — that sacramental union with the Church is the first mean of imparting spiritual life to the soul, and that the sacraments work *ex opere operato* — so the Protestant is necessarily led to an opposite view, from his insisting upon the order of salvation as laid down in Scripture, and dating the commencement of the life in Christ, in the full sense of the expression, from the regeneration effected by the Word, the effect of which is lively faith in Christ. Holding that, according to the normal, recorded instances, sacramental union with Christ, and with Christ's Church, follows, instead of preceding, that living faith which itself is a divine gift, he cannot otherwise define the Church than as a community of true believers: he cannot, at least, rest satisfied with a definition which makes sanctifying faith a separable accident of true Church membership. The great truth which he thinks he sees everywhere taught in Scripture, and verified in Christian experience — viz. that all grace flows from direct and immediate union with Christ the Head, the primary instrument of that union being, not an act of the Church, but the faith that comes by hearing, — makes it impossible for him to adopt so external a conception of the Church as that which pervades the Romish theory. With a visible Church, indeed, men may be in mere external conjunction, but with Christ no such union is possible; a union, that is, which does not imply sanctification by the Spirit of Christ. If such a thing could once exist, as in the case of Judas Iscariot, it cannot do so now that Christ has left the world, and ascended on high in His glorified body: a mere carnal fellowship with the Saviour is no longer possible. "Though we have known Christ after the flesh," is the Apostle's statement, "yet now henceforth know we Him" (after this manner) "no more;" and the conclusion immediately drawn is, "that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," or is spiritually quickened from above.* Thus the Protestant, holding that union with Christ by faith precedes, in the regular order of things, union with the Church, necessarily contemplates the latter as a community of

* 2 Cor. v. 16, 17.

persons, not who ought to be, but who are, led by the Spirit of Christ; since to be in Christ, in any proper sense of the words, involves participation in His quickening grace.

Nor can the Church ever assume, in the eyes of the Protestant, the position which the Romish and the Sacramental theory assigns to it, — viz. that of an intervening institution, by visible union with which access is gained to Christ, and so ultimately to God. For if, as we have seen, spiritual quickening, in the regular course of things, precedes such visible union; and he who has been spiritually quickened must have been brought, inchoatively at least, into union with Christ; it is obvious that visible incorporation in the Church cannot confer that first gift of life which is already possessed; cannot first introduce Him to Christ who has already, by faith, come to the Saviour. The Church thus falls back into its proper place, and its proper function, which is, to administer the means, but not to be either the depository or the giver, of grace.*

Section III.

THE POLITY OF THE CHURCH IN ITS EARLIER STAGES.

That Christ intended His followers to be collected into visible societies, may be inferred partly from His appointment of the Sacraments, and partly from the power, which He delegated to the Church or Congregation, of binding or loosing; whether by that expression we understand the making of by-laws and regulations, or the exercise of discipline: for it is obvious that functions like these belong, not to a casual assemblage of persons, but to a regularly constituted society, with organs or official representatives. Upon this point no difference of opinion exists between the two great parties which divide Christianity, any more than upon the divine institution of the Sacraments. Moreover, it is hard to conceive that no intimation would be given respecting the particular form of polity which Christian societies were to assume:

* On this point, see some good remarks in Dr. Hawkins' Sermons on the Church, p. 51.

it is not antecedently probable that so important a matter would be left absolutely to the discretion of Christians, or that Christ would send his Apostles forth to found Christian societies throughout the world without affording them sufficient guidance as to the manner in which such societies were to be organised. However true it may be that the special purpose of Christ's mission was, not to establish the Church, but to become the object of her faith, yet, just as He made provision that when the Church should actually come into existence it should not be without the visible symbols of Christian profession, and a governing body to preside over it, so it is reasonable to suppose that, in some way or other, mediately or immediately, by the previous dispensations of His providence as the Eternal Word, or by positive enactments, He would make it clear according to what outward form of polity Christian Societies are to be constituted. To the consideration of this point we now proceed.

The decisions of the Council of Trent upon this subject are such as might be expected from the general view which Romanism takes of the Church. As the Sacraments are transformed into legal ordinances, so the polity of the Church assumes the same general character. Taking that polity in the form which it is found to have assumed in the third or fourth centuries, the Council boldly traces it up, in all its constituent parts, — bishops, priests, deacons, subdeacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers, and ostiarii, — to the very beginning of Christianity; while to certain portions of it — as the three chief grades of the ministry, and the primacy of the Bishop of Rome — a divine origin is ascribed.*

Amongst ourselves, the advocates of the Church system, hesitating as they still do to ascribe a divine authority to its proper historical basis, — viz. extra-scriptural tradition, — are somewhat embarrassed in the management of the proof of their theory from Scripture alone. Equally with the Council of Trent, they affirm of the Cyprianic or episcopal form of polity, that it is of divine institution, and a law made permanently binding upon the Church; and that this form is as indissolubly connected with the inner life of the Church as, in our present state of being, the body is with the soul.† When, however, the scriptural proof for this doctrine

* "Ab ipso ecclesiæ initio sequentium ordinum nomina, atque uniuscujusque propria ministeria, subdiaconi scilicet, acolyti, exorcistæ, lectoris, et ostiarii, in usu fuisse cognoscuntur." Sess. 23. c. 2, "Si quis dixerit in ecclesiâ catholicâ non esse hierarchicam *divina ordinatione* institutam, quæ constat ex episcopis, presbyteris, et ministris: anathema sit." Id. Con. 6.

† Manning, Unity of the Church, p. 281.

comes to be adduced, it is found to be extremely meagre. That the apostles appointed deacons and presbyters, is certain; that the episcopate is of apostolic origin, is in the highest degree probable: but is every appointment which the Apostles can be proved to have made to be deemed, at once, of divine authority, and absolutely immutable? This obvious, but important, question lies at the very threshold of the controversy; yet it is commonly passed over in silence by the parties alluded to, who, when they have offered satisfactory evidence that the episcopal polity is, in the main, of apostolic origin, seem to conceive that nothing more is necessary to prove it to be a divine ordinance. But of this more hereafter. The question now before us is, did Christ himself — the Lawgiver, as He is called, of the New Covenant — deliver this form of ecclesiastical polity as that by which His church was to be distinguished from other religious societies? Difficult of proof as this may appear, it is in the last resort affirmed; and the way in which it is made out is as follows: Christ ordained the twelve (or eleven) Apostles to be governors and teachers of His Church; in their Apostolic commission were comprised three distinct subordinate ones, — the commissions of bishop, presbyter, and deacon; so that, in fact, though these offices are not found to have been formally instituted by Christ Himself, or even to have been formally in being, until the Church has existed for some time in the world, yet they were present, implicitly, from the first; each of the Apostles having in himself the polity of the Church, in all its plenitude, and the apostolic college by degrees shedding the three orders, hitherto enveloped in their own persons, as need required: first the Diaconate, then the Presbyterate, and lastly the Episcopate.

Several difficulties here present themselves to the mind. In what passage of Scripture is Christ recorded to have delivered to the Apostles three distinct commissions, with different powers attached to each? It will hardly be contended that the sending forth of the twelve, recorded in Matthew xii., was a formal commission to exercise the office of a presbyter; and even if it is to be so regarded, the divine institution of the diaconate remains without proof, no trace whatever of its appointment being found in our Lord's communications with His Apostles. Other commissions, besides the apostolic one itself, are nowhere mentioned as having been conferred by Christ upon the Apostles. That commission indeed was ample enough: the Apostles were to go forth as witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and inspired ministers of the

Spirit; they had authority to remit and retain sins, and a special gift of the Holy Ghost to enable them to discharge that solemn function; they were empowered to found Christian societies throughout the world, making believers members of such societies by baptism; and a commission to found a society necessarily implies authority to organise it, to appoint its officers, and to deliver the regulations by which it is to be governed. All this belonged to the apostolic office, which therefore comprised in itself powers much more extensive than those which were afterwards distributed between bishops, priests, and deacons. But we search in vain for the formal union of the three orders in the persons of the Apostles. And, be it observed, the theory requires such a formal devolution of the orders; for no one can transmit to another an office with which he has not been himself formally invested: he may create for the first time a new office, or he may empower others to do certain acts, — as, for instance, to preach, or to ordain, — which he has heretofore reserved to himself; but to make over an office to another requires that the person making it over have been himself, by competent authority, formally invested with it, and empowered by the same authority to transmit it. If we are to believe that the Apostles evolved out of themselves, or out of their own commission, the three offices in question, proof must be given of their having themselves been formally invested with the offices. But of this no sufficient proof is offered. That the twelve were appointed to be Apostles of Christ, is declared in Scripture; but when and where they were ordained bishops, priests, and deacons, nowhere appears.

Moreover, this implicit enfolding of the polity of the Church in the single apostolic office is at variance with the precedent furnished by the elder dispensation, to which, however, we are directed as the pattern of the Christian episcopate: the high priest, priest, and Levites corresponding, it is said, with the bishops, priests, and deacons. Neither in Moses, the law-giver of the old covenant, nor in Aaron, the first high priest, was the Mosaic polity embodied, or its offices concentrated, to be shed off in succession, as need should seem to require: the whole of that polity was delivered by God to Moses in the form in which it was to remain, the subordinate offices being as distinctly defined, and appropriated to certain persons, as the high priesthood itself was. It was not left to Moses, or to Aaron, to institute, when they should think fit, first the office of the inferior priesthood, and then that of the Levites: the draught of the ecclesiastical constitution proceeded in every part alike,

directly from God, and the office of the Levites, and that of the high priest, stood on the same footing of divine institution. This discrepancy between the two cases would, no doubt, be of little argumentative value, were there sufficient evidence that Christ did really unite in the Apostles the threefold ministry of the Church, with directions to separate from themselves each in turn as it was called for: in the absence of such evidence, however, it adds to the inherent improbability under which the supposition labours.

But, not to dwell longer upon a theory which is more fanciful than solid, we may observe that not only is there no scriptural proof of the concentration of the three offices in the apostolate, but there was no need for any such formal delivery by Christ of a scheme of Church government: the theory is superfluous, as well as unsupported. It betrays, in fact, a misapprehension of the true historical basis upon which the polity of the Church was, under apostolic sanction, erected; at least in those earlier stages of it with which alone we are now concerned. That basis was the Jewish synagogue. The connexion between the Church and the Synagogue is a point of such importance, that some remarks upon the origin and nature of the latter institution will not be here out of place.

The synagogue was an extra-legal institution. Its origin is to be assigned to a comparatively late period of Jewish history; no trace of it being discoverable until after the Babylonish captivity. That Moses enjoined the priests and elders of Israel to read the law in the hearing of the people every seventh year at the feast of tabernacles;* that it was the office of the priests and Levites to declare the meaning of the law to those who, in doubtful cases, consulted them;† that the Levites, scattered throughout Judea, were the ordinary teachers of the people, where religious teaching was in request; — thus much is either declared, or implied, in the books of the Old Testament: but Vitringa has shown, in his learned work upon the Synagogue, that the data thus furnished are insufficient to warrant the conclusion, that places of public worship, other than the temple, existed previously to the seventy years' captivity.‡ The disordered state of the Jewish commonwealth, under the judges, and many of the kings; the frequent lapses of the people into idolatry; the desuetude into which the reading of the Scriptures had fallen, — as evinced by the surprise of Hilkiah, the high priest, at finding in the temple the book of

* Deut. xxxi. 10, 11.

† Deut. vii. 8, 9.

‡ De Synag. Vet. lib. i. p. 2.

the law, and the consternation of Josiah at hearing its contents, from which we may gather the extreme ignorance of the mass of the people, — are inconsistent with the supposition that, at that time, the custom of assembling to hear the law read and expounded prevailed. To a period, therefore, subsequent to the captivity, we must assign the first establishment of synagogues, strictly so called. And the captivity itself sufficiently accounts for their rise. Deprived of the temple services, the pious Jew, "by the waters of Babylon," endeavoured to supply their place by such public exercises of religion as yet remained within his reach. These were, necessarily, of a character different from the temple worship, and consisted in social prayer and praise, and, when opportunity offered, hearing from the mouth of a prophet the Word of God. Thus more than once it is mentioned in the prophecies of Ezekiel that the spirit of God fell upon the prophet as "the elders of Judah sat before him;" doubtless for the purpose of receiving religious instruction at his mouth.* And that this had become a common practice, not only with the elders of the captivity, but with the people at large, may be gathered from the reproof addressed to them by God through the same prophet: — "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them." † Restored to their own country, the Jews continued the custom of these weekly assemblies, the homiletic services of which would be the more valued when the gift of prophecy was finally withdrawn. Indeed, the religious assembly convoked by Nehemiah to celebrate the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, presents an exact counterpart of what afterwards became the stated worship of the synagogue. The congregation being assembled, Ezra the scribe ascended a pulpit of wood, which had been erected for the purpose, and taking the book of the law, read portions thereof in the hearing of the people. Inasmuch, however, as many of the latter had lost their familiarity with the ancient Hebrew language, certain Levites stood beside Ezra, and gave the sense of the passages as they were read. The people, finally, when Ezra blessed the Lord, responded with their Amen, and, bowing their heads, worshipped. ‡ The elements of the synagogical worship are here all present; but we do not find that any building was set apart for the celebration of the religious ceremony. It is to the extra-Palestine Jews, who began to multi-

* Ezek. xiv. 1.; xx. 1.

† Ibid. c. xxxiii. 31.

‡ Nehem. viii.

ply after the captivity, and who could not resort to the temple for religious purposes, that we are probably to assign the first erection of buildings for the celebration of the weekly sabbath assemblies. The precedent thus set appears to have been speedily followed by the Jews of Palestine: synagogues multiplied throughout Judea; and, in Jerusalem alone, in our Lord's time, there existed, as historians tell us, 480 of these structures.*

From what has been already said, the nature of the synagogical worship may be collected. The institution was an extra-legal one; that is, it had no necessary connexion with the temple, or the Levitical worship. Its services, instead of being sacrificial and typical, were homiletic and verbal. A priest, as such, had in the synagogue no function to discharge. He was not indeed excluded from its offices; but no preference was shown him, except in one point:—he was ordinarily called upon to pronounce the solemn benediction which formed part of the religious services. If, however, it happened that no priest was at the time present, one of the ordinary officers of the synagogue (the שליח צבור, or *legatus ecclesiæ*) might perform this act.† With respect to the persons who might teach and expound, the greatest liberty prevailed. While this office properly pertained to the Archisynagogi, or rulers of the synagogue, and could not be exercised without their permission, it was commonly delegated by them to any properly qualified member of the assembly who might intimate his wish to discharge it.‡ Hence it excited no surprise when our Lord, in the synagogue of Nazareth, "stood up for to read;"§ the sacred volume was delivered to Him as a matter of course, though he had no official connexion with that particular synagogue. In like manner, when Paul and Barnabas entered the synagogue at Pisidia, and took their seats upon the doctors' bench, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, who, in all probability, were perfect strangers, a permissive message,—"if they had any word of exhortation for the people," to "say on."‖

The form of government which prevailed in the synagogue was not everywhere the same. In the more populous cities it was conducted on the Presbyterian model; a college or senate of persons, skilled in the law, being invested with the chief authority; while in the smaller villages, where there were not learned men in sufficient number to form such a senate, the synagogue was placed

* See Vitringa, de Synag. Vet. libr I. p. 2. c. 12.
† Vitringa, lib. iii. p. 2. c. 20.
‡ Vitringa, lib. iii. p. 1. c. 7.
§ Luke, iv. 16.
‖ Acts, xiii, 14, 15.

under the presidency of a single doctor of the law, who bore the title of רב, or teacher.* Hence may be reconciled the varying statements of Scripture, which sometimes speaks of the "rulers" and sometimes of "the ruler" of the synagogue:" † in the one case, alluding apparently to a corporate governing body; in the other, to an individual holding the same office. The former, however, was the ordinary and regular form of government proper to the synagogue; as, indeed, there is only one passage of Scripture (Luke, xiii. 14.) which appears to imply that there existed any other. The members of the presiding senate were sometimes called Ἀρχισυνάγωγοι, rulers of the synagogue; but their proper Jewish appellation was זקנים, or elders: in the New Testament, these appellations are applied to them indiscriminately. To teach and to rule were the two chief duties of their office; the term ruling comprising the regulation of all matters connected with the public worship of the synagogue, the care of the poor, and the administration of discipline. The mode of exercising discipline was either by excommunication or by scourging: to both which practices the writers of the New Testament make frequent allusions.

Besides its governing college of elders, the synagogue had its inferior officers, known by the name of Chazzan and Scheliach Tsibbor.‡ In the ancient synagogue, the office of the latter seems to have been one of dignity; for he acted as the spokesman or representative of the congregation in reciting the appointed forms of prayer. The functionary first named corresponded with the apparitors of modern churches, and his duties were pretty much what theirs are. Of this order of officers was the Ὑπηρέτης, or minister, to whom our Lord, after He had closed the book from which He had been reading, returned it to be deposited in its place.§

Such is a brief sketch of the origin and constitution of the Jewish synagogue; an institution which, under the providence of God, had, in the lapse of ages, gradually established itself wherever there were Jews, and the design of which evidently was, that it should form the groundwork of the polity of the Christian church, and present an existing historical fact with which Christianity might connect itself. The worship of the synagogue formed the point of transition between the symbolical services of the temple and the verbal services of the new economy; and, by habituating

* Vitringa, lib. ii. c. 9.
† Acts, xiii. 14.; Luke, xiii. 14.
‡ Vitringa, lib. iii. p. 2, c. 1.
§ Luke, iv. 20.

the Jewish mind to the offerings of prayer and praise instead of the bloody sacrifices of the law, and to the ministry of the Word instead of the ministry of types, it smoothed the way for the Gospel dispensation. In our Lord's time, the Levitical worship was of course still maintained, and the temple frequented; but it is evident, from the inspired record, that that worship had become, to some extent, supplanted in public estimation, by the younger institution, and that the active, living, force of Jewish religionism centered in the synagogue. A change which, like the other modifications of sentiment traceable in the history of the chosen people, must be regarded as having been brought about with a special reference to the approaching advent of Christ.

That the Church did really derive its polity from the synagogue is a fact upon the proof of which, in the present state of theological learning, it is needless to expend many words. As far as the present argument is concerned, it is a matter of indifference whether we suppose the temple or the synagogue to have been the model after which Christian societies were organised; for in either case, it was an already existing form of polity upon which Christianity engrafted itself, and adapted to its own uses. The Romish theologians, as might be expected, adopt the former hypothesis, which is also maintained by some of our own divines, — *e. g.* Usher;* but their arguments have been met, and the question conclusively settled, by Vitringa, in his learned work De Synagoga vetere.† Independently of the overwhelming amount of direct evidence which proves that the synagogue, not the temple, constituted the pattern which the Apostles proposed to themselves, the simple facts that the founders of the first Christian societies were Jews, and that the first Christian society came into existence in Jerusalem, seem of themselves decisive of the question. For, as long as the temple stood, and especially in the very locality which it occupied, it never could have entered the mind of a Jew to establish a religious society, the polity of which should be framed after that of the Levitical worship: such a proceeding would have appeared to him a profane parody on the divine appointments. We have seen what care the Jews took in framing the worship of the synagogue, to distinguish it from that of the temple, both by the titles and by the functions which they assigned to the officers of the former institution. The same feeling must be supposed to

* In his work, De Episcop. et Metrop. Origine.

† De Synag. Vet. Prolegom. cc. 5 & 6.

have actuated the Apostles; that is, it must be supposed that they would shrink from making the polity of the church a transcript of that of the temple, unless they had received an express command from Christ so to do. But of such command, no proof has ever been offered; so far from it, our Lord Himself contemplated, prospectively, His Church as assuming the synagogical form, both when He promised that where two or three should be gathered together in His name, He would be in the midst, and still more distinctly, when He gave authority to every society of His followers to bind and loose, and to excommunicate the disobedient.

Various additional arguments might be made to converge upon this point. Thus the names which Christian ministers bear in the New Testament—presbyter or episcopus, and deacon—are all derived from the synagogue; while never once are they designated by the term Ἱερεὺς or Priest, the proper title of those who officiated in the temple. The very term itself, synagogue, is, in one passage of the New Testament,* applied to a Christian assembly, though it is true that afterwards it was purposely avoided, and the word ἐκκλησία which corresponds to the Hebrew קָהָל, substituted for it, in order to distinguish the church from the synagogue.

St. Paul, in chap. xiv. of the first epistle to the Corinthians, presents us with a graphic picture of the mode in which Christians, in the first age of the Church, celebrated public worship. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper constituted the visible symbol of their profession, and the pledge of their union with Christ and with each other; but the governing function in the assembly was the ministry of the Word, whether it assumed the extraordinary forms of "tongues," or a "revelation," or "prophecy," or "the interpretation of tongues," or consisted of the stated instructions of regular pastors and teachers. Among the various spiritual gifts then common in the Church, the chief place was to be assigned to prophecy; for "he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Of any typical or sacrificial element, St. Paul makes no mention: the whole service, with the exception of the Lord's Supper, was manifestly homiletic or verbal. That the gifts mentioned in the chapter were, for the most part, extraordinary, and in process of time were to cease, makes no difference as regards the argument; for it is the essential character of Christian worship, not the particular vehicle of its expression, that is the point now under consideration.

* Jas. ii. 2.

In the sixth chapter of the same Epistle, St. Paul blames the Corinthians for not referring their disputes to the decision of the church or congregation with which they were connected; and, instead thereof, going to law with each other before heathen magistrates. To understand the passage, we have only to bear in mind that among the Jews, the judicial consistories, appointed for the determination of smaller causes in each locality, were composed of the same persons who constituted the senate of the synagogue; it being impossible, as Vitringa has remarked, under the Jewish polity, to make a distinction between the Church and the State, since the Jewish civil rulers were at the same time the ecclesiastical.* The circumstances under which the first Christians were placed in reference to the heathen courts of justice, made it desirable that their civil differences should be settled among themselves; and the custom of the Jewish synagogue supplied a precedent in point. The chief qualification necessary to the Hebrew judges being an accurate knowledge of the law, they received the generic title of חכמים, or wise men, answering to the Greek σοφοὶ or σοφίσται;† and their office, like all the others connected with the synagogue, had no necessary connexion with the priesthood. "Is it so," asks St. Paul, "that there is not a wise man among you? No, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren."‡ In this epistle, too, St. Paul both recognizes the right of every Christian society to excommunicate obstinate offenders, and blames the Corinthians for not having exercised this power in the case of the incestuous member of their Church. But, as has been remarked, excommunication belonged to the synagogue, not to the temple.

In setting apart the ministers of a Christian Church to their offices, the Apostles, we know, practised the rite of imposition of hands. Now this ceremony was not derived from the temple, for the priests were consecrated in a different manner — viz. by being anointed with the holy oil, and arrayed in the holy garments. It was from the synagogue that the imposition of hands passed into the Church. The rite was a common one among the Jews, being used by them on a variety of occasions; but, in our Lord's time, it had become more particularly appropriated to the synagogue and the academies, the chief doctors of which were in the custom of laying hands upon such of their scholars as had given proof of their proficiency in learning; who, after this ceremony, were

* De Synag. Vet. lib. ii. c. 9. † See Vitringa, lib. ii. c. 10. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 5.

regarded as invested with public authority to teach.* It was customary, also, when any of these licensed teachers, from among whom the members of the great council at Jerusalem, and of the smaller consistories scattered throughout Judæa, were chosen, were called to the exercise of ecclesiastical functions, to lay hands upon them by way of inauguration to their office.

The very form under which the Church of Christ was to become visible in the world—viz. as an aggregate of visible churches, connected by certain common ties, but not under one earthly government—must have directed the minds of the Apostles to the synagogue as their model. For the synagogue differed from the temple in this very particular—viz. that, while the latter was but one, and was confined to one locality, the former admitted of indefinite multiplication; and, in fact, synagogues existed in almost every part of the Roman Empire. To the Apostles, divinely instructed as they were in the universal character of Christ's religion, the polity of the synagogue must have presented itself as the suitable model after which to organize the Church: they knew of no other capable of universal diffusion.

Not however to dwell longer upon a point upon which hardly any real doubt can exist, let us proceed to draw the necessary inferences. It is obvious that the question, Did Christ Himself deliver a form of polity for His Church? does not admit of an answer either directly affirmative, or directly negative. If what is meant be, Did Christ deliver to His Apostles a new system of Church government as Moses prescribed one for the Jews? the answer must be in the negative: of this no trace is found in Scripture; nor, as we have seen, was there any necessity for it. But if the meaning of the question is, Did the special providence of God so order things that a polity suitable to Christianity should exist among the Jews at the time when Christ appeared? it must be answered affirmatively, and upon this very fact it is that the Protestant builds his argument. For thus, in the matter of Church polity, as in the Sacraments, Christ is found adapting to the purposes of His Church a well-known, and existing, institution. Christianity is seen content to throw herself, as regards her visible existence in the world, into old and familiar forms. Had it been our Lord's purpose to establish, in the first instance, a visible system, distinct from the existing one, He would, instead of sanctioning an adaptation of the synagogue to the Church, have delivered

* On the Jewish סמיכה ידים, or imposition of hands, see Vitringa, De Syn. lib. iii. p. I. c. 15.

to His Apostles a new framework of polity, with directions to them to plant it, as the first step towards evangelizing the nations, wherever opportunity offered. On this supposition, the Apostles would have traversed the world, carrying with them the prescribed draught of ecclesiastical polity: they would have set it up, wherever they obtained a footing, at once in all its completeness; and then they would have incorporated men in it, in the mass, with the view of ultimately making them Christians: in short, the institution would have preceded the persons who were to compose it. So indeed the Apostles are made to act. The infant Church of Christ, we are told, appeared, primarily, as "a visible organized system,"—"a newly developed system, which at that time began to take the place of God's previous economies, and to overspread Judea and the countries round about."* But no assertion can be more incorrect. The newness lay not in the exterior framework, but in the unseen presence of the Saviour: what transformed the Jewish synagogue into a Christian congregation was, not an outward change of polity or ritual (with the exception of the two Sacraments), but the fact, that where two or three were gathered together in Christ's name He was in the midst. The old forms were, as far as was possible, retained: it was the spirit within that was new. Instead of carrying about with them a new model of polity, the Apostles found, not only in Judea, but in every principal city of the empire, providentially at hand the appointed pattern after which Christian societies were to be organized; for wherever there were Jews, and there were Jews every where, there was a synagogue.

It needs but a careful perusal of Scripture to perceive how erroneous is the view above alluded to. Far from attracting the attention of the Jewish people by the singularity of the visible system of the Church, the Apostles and their followers were looked upon simply as a new Jewish sect, to be classed with those which had sprung up in great numbers in the latter period of the Hebrew commonwealth. As such they evidently are regarded in the address of Gamaliel to the chief priests.† The sect of the Nazarenes was their distinctive appellation.‡ These Jewish sects had their peculiar opinions and practices; but they never considered themselves, nor were they considered by their Jewish brethren, as separatists from the institutions of Moses. In this light it was that the

* Manning, Unity, etc. p. 77.

† Acts, v. 34. et seq.

‡ Acts, xxiv. 5.

first Christian Church presented itself. Just as the services of the synagogue did not at all interfere with those of the temple, so we find the Apostles still frequenting the latter, and at the regular hours appointed for prayer; even of the whole body of believers it is recorded that they continued "with one accord in the temple."* Their peculiar association as believers in Christ by no means, in their own estimation, or in that of the people, dissolved their connexion with the Jewish law. Had it been otherwise, they never would have enjoyed, as we are told they did enjoy, "favour with all the people."† Perhaps there is no point more deserving of attention, as illustrative of the nature of Christianity, than that of which we are now speaking, viz. the absence of any attempt on the part of the Apostles to assume a hostile or separatist attitude in reference to the divinely appointed Jewish ordinances. According to the testimony of St. James, and the elders of Jerusalem, the believing Jews of that place were "all zealous of the law;" and they mention the fact without any accompanying mark of disapprobation.‡ St. James's own practice in this respect may be gathered from his manner of life as described by Eusebius, or rather Hegesippus, and from the high estimation in which he was held by not only the believing, but the unbelieving Jews.§ Even the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who contended so earnestly against the false teachers who would have made the observance of the ceremonial law in the case of Christians a necessary condition of justification, thought it not inconsistent with his professed opinions to comply, as a matter of expediency, with the legal ordinances. He took upon himself "a vow:" he "hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost:" he associated himself at Jerusalem with certain persons about to purify themselves in the temple as the law prescribed; and this by the advice of St. James and the elders.‖ It was St. Paul's constant practice, when he broke new ground in the course of his ministry, instead of setting up a new visible system, to betake himself, in the first instance, to the synagogue of the place, if it possessed one, and, exercising the right which belonged to him as a Jewish doctor of expounding the Old Testament Scriptures, to

* Acts, iii. 1, 2. 46. † Acts, ii. 47. ‡ Acts, xxi. 20.

§ *Οἶνον καὶ σίκερα οὐκ ἔπιεν, οὐδὲ ἔμψυχον ἔφαγεν· ξυρὸν ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἀνέβη, ἔλαιον οὐκ ἀλείψατο, καὶ βαλανείῳ οὐκ ἐχρήσατο· τουτῷ μόνῳ ἐξῆν εἰς τὰ ἅγια εἰσιέναι· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐρεοῦν ἐφόρει, ἀλλὰ σινδόνας· καὶ μόνος εἰσήρχετο εἰς τὸν ναόν· ηὑρίσκετό τε κείμενος ἐπὶ τοῖς γόνασι, καὶ αἰτούμενος ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ ἄφεσιν.*—Euseb. Hist. l. ii. c. 23.

‖ Acts, xviii. 18.; xx. 16.; xxi. 24.

dispute therein, "persuading the things of the kingdom of God," as long as he was permitted to do so.* Even the believing Jews he was by no means anxious at once to detach from their old connexion, with the view of forming them into a distinct society. At Ephesus at least, it was not until "divers" (of the synagogue) "were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude," that "he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus."†

In fact, let the case be supposed (it is one that might easily have occurred) of a whole synagogue, with its elders and ministers, having been, through the preaching of the Apostles, converted to the faith of Christ; and we have at once a Christian church or congregation, such as that at Philippi, consisting of "the saints" in that place, "with the bishops," or elders, "and deacons." With the single exception of the two sacraments, the external aspect of the society would remain the same as before; the officers would bear the same names, and their duties would be the same; the religious services would be the same in nature, being, in each case, not sacrificial, but homiletic. Wherein, then, would be the essential difference between the present and the former state of the society? It is not denied that the sacraments would serve to mark the change; but surely the real point of distinction would be, as has been already remarked, that Christ, who before was absent, is now present in the assembly of His worshippers.

If it be important for the determining of the question at issue to observe that the general form of polity which Christian societies were to assume had been provided long before the Saviour came into the world, not less worthy of attention is the fact that that organisation was a matter of gradual development, and advanced by successive steps. Were the Romish view the true one, the Church ought to have exhibited itself from the very beginning, in the complete panoply of a graduated hierarchy, with the supreme pontiff at its head; or, at least, with the episcopal polity fully developed. It has been observed, that nothing is more incompatible with the nature and object of a legal institution, than that its polity should be left to grow up, and enlarge itself, as need might require. It is most certain, however, that thus it was that the polity of the Church grew into form. Setting aside the fanciful hypothesis of the three grades of the Christian ministry being enveloped in the Apostolate, the Church appears, in the first mo-

* Acts, xix. 8. † Acts, xix. 9.

ment of its existence, without any visible organisation properly so called. It was a company of men, "filled with the Holy Ghost," associating together for the purposes of common prayer and "the breaking of bread," and cleaving to the teaching of the Apostles. That the Apostles appear as the teachers and governors of the infant society is easily accounted for, without the supposition of their embodying in themselves any formal system of Church polity. Even previously to the descent of the Spirit, the Apostles, as the chosen attendants upon Christ, and witnesses of His resurrection, are found assuming the chief place in the body of expectant believers: nothing was more natural than that they should do so. If to the privileges just mentioned we add the various commissions given them by Christ, by which they were invested generally with supreme authority in the Church, we have all that is necessary to account for the position of presidency which they assumed when, by the outpouring of the Spirit, the Church was formally constituted. By the miracles which they wrought, and especially by the exercise of the power conveyed to them by Christ, of pronouncing sins remitted or retained (as in the case of Ananias), they proved their divine commission: what more natural than that it should be acknowledged? For a time, then, the Church existed without a formal polity, under the presidency of its natural leaders, the Apostles, no intermediate grades of ministry being as yet visible. In this state it remained until an alteration of circumstances gave rise to the first real step in the permanent organisation of Christian societies. "When the number of the disciples were multiplied," a dispute arose between the Grecians and the Hebrews concerning the daily ministration of the alms of the Church.* Perceiving that the time was come for enlarging the simple polity which had hitherto sufficed, the Apostles acted in this emergency (doubtless under a general guidance of the Holy Spirit, but still,) according to the dictates of human wisdom: they introduced a subdivision of labour, assigning to a separate body of officers a part of those duties which they had hitherto discharged themselves. In creating this new order of ministers, they did not separate from their apostleship a ministerial grade which had hitherto been enveloped in it: they found in the synagogue an office resembling that which had become necessary in the Church, and in the Church they instituted a corresponding one. Whether the so-called first seven deacons discharged the

* Acts vi. 1.

same functions as the offices known by that name in other societies, or not, is immaterial to the present question: it seems at least to appear that in them we have, if not the literate proper, the rudiments of it. That the Apostles in the appointment of deacons, designedly followed the synagogal model, it is not necessary to maintain: they probably acted without any such special reference: but it is not the less certain that the idea of the office must have been suggested to them by the analogous use of the Jewish institution.*

To a similar occurrence of natural events we must refer the rise of the presbyterate, the first institution of which, however, is not recorded. For several years after the appointment of deacons, the Church at Jerusalem seems to have had no other ministers than Deacons and Apostles. Debarred from the service (which they had from conscientious motives) of the Hellenist Christians, the Apostles acted both as the chief governors and the teachers of the society: devoting themselves more particularly to the "ministry of the Word and to prayer."† It is obvious that this state of things could not last. The growth of the mother church at Jerusalem, and the rapid formation of other Christian societies, first in Judea, and then beyond its boundaries, rendered it more and more difficult for the Apostles to unite themselves, in person, to any one society. The remedy obviously was to appoint in each church an inspection, not so much official to superintend its affairs, and act as its permanent rulers; who should, as the supply was in the place of the Apostles. And here, as in the former instance, the synagogue supplied, in its college of governing elders, the pattern of what was wanting. The Apostles, in establishing, as they did, a governing presbytery in every church, did not invent, from themselves what had never

* Things De Synag. Vet. Ho. ii. p. 2. c. 1) argue that the office of Stephen and his companions was altogether distinct from that of the persons mentioned in Acts vi. Lightfoot (Horæ Hebraicæ, &c. vol. i. p. 48; and Horæ, Antiqu. &c. p. 206. Vitringa was led to adopt this view, from finding that the seven persons mentioned in Acts vi. discharged higher functions than those of the deacons of the Synagogue, which appeared to him to render the instance of the Seniors likewise from the synagogue inapt. But it is the characteristic tendency of an infallible work to unite the extremes between the polity of the church and that of the synagogue beyond what is allowable or necessary. That the synagogue furnished the general precedent of the polity of the church is most certain: but this cannot mean, that it furnished a precedent for every thing which was to be allowed. To suppose that the Apostles literally followed the synagogal pattern in every particular is evidently unfair with regard both to the letter, and to the spirit of the Christian dispensation.

† Acts, vi. 4.

been, as a formal office, in themselves; they instituted a new office, and yet an old one; new to the Christian Church, but of ancient standing in the synagogue. Thus it was that the polity of the Church grew up by degrees, and according to a natural law. The Apostles proceeded, in this matter, neither according to a divine prescription, nor as if the Church had no proper existence until its visible organization was complete, but step by step, according as the exigencies of the Christian Society, as a society, called for new provisions. As long as the simpler usages sufficed, they were permitted to remain: it was only when difficulties arose, or the extension of Christianity rendered additional organization necessary, that the Apostles interfered to supply the defect. The Church was permitted to develope her polity from within outwards; the want was always allowed to be felt before it was supplied. No fact is more certain, or more significant, than this. For the question immediately arises, Was the Church in existence on the day of Pentecost, or was it not? If it was, as all parties admit, then its true being cannot lie in the visible polity with which it afterwards became clothed, whether we stop at the Episcopal system, or advance to the apex of the pyramid—the Roman pontiff: for at the period of which we are speaking, even the first essays towards establishing that polity had not been made.* If it did not exist implicitly in the Apostles (and that it did not has been already shown), it was not, for some time after the establishment of the Church, formally in existence at all; so that if the Romish theory be correct, the primitive Church at Jerusalem resembled the spirit of a man separate from his body; that is, it had no visible existence upon earth. Moreover, if covenanted grace be connected with, for example, the episcopal polity, how comes it that the Apostles did not at once establish that polity in every Christian society? Was the Pentecostal Church destitute of a privilege which the Church in the times of Ignatius enjoyed? Had the members of it no covenanted access to God, and its Sacraments no validity? It is difficult to suppose that the Apostles

* That is, by any formal enactment. It is with this limitation that the above observations, and those which occur in a subsequent part of this work on the subject of episcopacy, must always be understood. For, in its rudiment, or informal state, the episcopate may be said to have been coeval, or nearly so, with the Church itself. If the position of the apostolic college collectively, in reference to the other orders of the Christian ministry, presents but a slender analogy to that of the episcopate proper, the place which St. James evidently occupied in the Church of Jerusalem appears to have been really that of a bishop or chief overseer. But the informal rudiment of an office is one thing; the formal creation of it another.

were ill-instructed in the principles of Christianity, or neglectful of the trust committed to them; but one or the other they must have been, if, for a length of time, they omitted taking the steps necessary to give the Church its being. But it is needless to say more. The difficulties are innumerable which beset every attempt to reconcile the Catholic theory of the Church with the fact of the progressive development of its polity.

"He that looks," we are told, "to find from the beginning of the Gospel an entire hierarchy, with its supplements and complements of order and office, must have a mind strangely unskilled in the analogies of God's works. The notion that the Church was perfected in all its organic parts — uno Apostolorum afflatu — by the first breath of St. Peter and the Apostles, has no foundation in the testimony either of inspired or uninspired history. On the contrary, not only the analogy of all God's inanimate and animate works, but also of His earlier dispensations, would lead us beforehand to look for what, in Holy Scripture, we find." * That the visible polity of the Church was not at once perfected is most true; but we must demur to the assertion that, the Church theory being supposed to be the true one, to expect things to have been otherwise indicates a mind unskilled in the analogies furnished by God's earlier dispensations. The Church theory affirms that a certain form of polity was delivered by Christ, either directly or through his Apostles, which is as essential to the Church as the body of a man is to a man; in other words, is absolutely essential to it; so essential, as that, apart from it, neither is there a covenanted way of access to God, nor can Christianity exert that renovating influence upon human nature which it was intended to exert. Now the only other instance which God's dispensations supply of a religious institution based upon this principle is that of the Mosaic economy; and in that instance we find that God *did* deliver the external framework of the polity "perfected in all its organic parts," and in detail, so that nothing was left to be supplied at a future time. The reason of so material a deviation from this precedent, in the case of the Christian Church, it is incumbent upon the Cyprianist to explain.

In the observation that "Christianity came into the world as an idea, rather than an institution," † there is important truth, if for the word "idea" we substitute the presence of Christ by His spirit in the hearts of believers. Christianity did come into the world

* Manning, Unity of the Church, p. 119. † Newman's Essay on Development, p. 116.

much more as a spiritual influence than as a visible institution. Christianity first appeared in the hundred and twenty, who, with the Apostles, were "with one accord in one place;" and what was the Church in that first moment of its existence? Not, primarily, an institution; not a papal, or an episcopal, or a presbyterian body; not a visible system, standing out in strong contrast with the existing one; but simply a company of men, "all filled with the Holy Ghost."* Of course, it could not always remain in this state. If the Church was to have a visible existence in the world, in the form of Christian societies, such societies must have laws, and representatives, and officers; in one word, must be visibly organised. But the whole history of the first Church shows how naturally, and, so to speak, spontaneously, the work of organisation advanced. The Christian society followed the law of all societies which have their essential principle within. When it became necessary to put on an outward form, it threw itself out, by force of the spirit within, under apostolic guidance, into such a polity as was suitable to its nature. The invisible constitution of the Church by the spirit preceded the visible manifestations of its existence, and the visible development of its polity. Moehler treats it as an absurdity to affirm, with Luther, that the visible Church owes its existence to the invisible, or, to speak more accurately, that the inner life of the Church precedes the visible exhibition of that life. "According to Luther, the Church is a congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly preached: first, therefore, there must be saints, whose origin and appearance no one can account for: then they preach."† Luther's position is, however, as Nitzsch observes,‡ nothing but the strict truth. The Church of Christ was not properly in existence before the day of Pentecost: much less did she, before that era, go forth on her mission to evangelize the world. A body of believers indeed had been by Christ gathered out of the Jewish people to be the first recipients of the Pentecostal effusion; but before that event, this body could not be called distinctively His Church. It is, then, nothing but the fact, that the invisible Church, or rather that which in the Church is invisible, preceded that which is visible. The spiritual power which wrought so wonderful a change in the Apostles must first descend from heaven, and give to the Church its inner form,—its spiritual characteristic! afterwards the Apostles preach, and organise. First, there are saints, or men in whom

* Acts, ii. 4. † Symbolik, p. 426. ‡ Protestant. Beantwort. &c., p. 233.

Christ is formed by an invisible operation of His Spirit, whose origin, however, is not unknown; then these saints proceed to execute their appointed mission. The argument of the opponent only recoils upon himself.

Section IV.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

It appears, then (to state briefly the conclusion to which the foregoing remarks on the Christian dispensation conduct us), that both the nature of the divinely appointed ordinances of the Gospel and the process by which the polity of the Church became fixed, are such as to exclude the supposition of Christianity being, primarily, a visible institution. Had Christ come as a lawgiver in the same sense in which Moses was, He would, if the analogy of the earlier dispensation is to be any guide to us, have instituted other ordinances than those which He did, and on a different principle. In whatever point of view we compare the two systems, the contrast strikes us. The principle of the Mosaic law was to prescribe, in the first instance, to the outward act, with the view of ultimately forming the inner sentiment. The principle of the Christian dispensation is, to pre-suppose the existence of the inner sentiment, and, upon that supposition, to erect the visible superstructure. Under the former, men were placed under an outward rule of discipline; under the latter, the visible aspect of the system is the result of the natural, though not unguided, efforts of the inner life to clothe itself in its proper organic form. There, the performance of the prescribed act — the opus operatum — had a real, independent, value: here, the mere act is, in God's sight, valueless; it derives its worth from the living faith presumed to be present in those who perform it. That these are, severally, the characteristic features of the Mosaic and the Christian systems appears clear from the facts connected with the delivery of each.

Nor is the difference any other than that which we should have been led to expect from the contrast drawn by St. Paul between

the two dispensations. The passage has been before alluded to,* but it deserves a more attentive consideration. "Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law."† The former dispensation, it has been observed, was the childhood of revealed religion, and the whole system was framed with a reference to the low capacity, intellectual and moral, of the pupil. In this condition, however, it cannot be supposed that religion was to remain always. To advert to the analogy employed by St. Paul, even before full emancipation from the restraints of discipline takes place, the effects of a judicious system of education will be perceptible; and in proportion as the moral sense becomes stronger, and more enlightened, the instructions of the teacher will appeal more to reason, and general principles will take the place of specific prescriptions; the growing intelligence of the pupil rendering this mode of treatment both necessary and possible. At length the process of education being supposed to be complete, the pupil is released from the discipline of tutors and governors, and emerges, not into a second childhood, but into the privileges and responsibilities of manhood. What is the peculiarity of his present, as compared with his former, condition? Not that he is now free to abandon the virtuous habits in which he has been trained, but that he is expected to do spontaneously what he formerly did from compulsion. The liberty which he enjoys, far from being license, consists in his no longer needing an outwardly coercive law to retain him in the path of duty, but in his having become a law to himself. With him virtuous habits are presumed to have become second nature. It is expected that an inward perception of what is right and expedient, a moral intuition, will dictate to him what in each emergency, as it arises, is the path of duty. In the various circumstances of life which call for prudent action, the man, as contrasted with the child, is thrown upon his own resources; and the successful conduct of affairs depends, in his case, not upon following a code of minute prescriptions, for none such, embracing every case, could be given, but upon the application, under the guidance of reason and conscience, of cer-

* P. 93. † Gal. iv. 1—6.

tain general principles to each particular case as it arises. Thus it is that virtuous manhood shapes its course through the shoals of life, and for the most part safely. Certain it is, that more than this general measure of guidance cannot be expected, and is not, in fact, vouchsafed.

Christianity being, as St. Paul declares, the manhood of revealed religion, the Christian has emerged from the bondage of the letter into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Consequently a mode of dealing with him may be adopted which, under the earlier dispensation, would have been unsafe. The scanty measure of religious knowledge and spiritual understanding which the Jew possessed rendered it unfit that any part of religion should be left to his discretion; and, therefore, in his case, everything, even to the minutest details of the ritual, was prescribed by law. And just as children are expected to obey without understanding the reason of what is required of them, so the Jew, in the first stages at least of his course, went through the prescribed ordinances of the law with but an imperfect apprehension of their meaning: his worship of God was not to him a λογικὴ λατρεία, a "reasonable service," though by us it is seen to have been so. Redemption not having been actually effected, nor the way into the holiest laid open, spiritual realities were veiled under type and figure. But now, that these blessings have been purchased and vouchsafed, and "we all with open face" behold, "as in a glass, the glory of the Lord," believers are released from subjection to carnal ordinances, for they enjoy that real fellowship with God, through Christ, which the Mosaic system was intended to symbolise, and represent. Of this maturer stage of spiritual growth, an enlightened understanding in matters of religion is the natural accompaniment; and in the New Testament, Christians are always supposed to possess spiritual discernment, both as regards doctrine and practice. They are exhorted and reasoned with, as understanding in general what the will of the Lord is, though they may err in particular interpretations of it. Erroneous doctrines are refuted, and violations of order rectified, by an appeal to certain admitted general principles. "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men;" "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say:"* this is the style of apostolic exhortation. Christians are supposed capable of distinguishing between the substance and the

* 1 Cor. xiv. 20. Ibid. x. 15.

accidents of religion, and of assigning to each its proper degree of importance. Let a comparison, in short, be instituted between the style adopted by St. Paul in rectifying the disorders of the Corinthian Church, and that which characterises the giving of the law, and the difference between the two dispensations will be at once apparent:—the Jew is treated as a child, the Corinthian Christian as a man.

With this view of Christianity, it was in perfect accordance that the external manifestations of the inner life of the Church should be left comparatively free and unfettered; comparatively so; for no one denies that Christ prescribed ordinances, and, indirectly, provided a polity for His church. It was to be expected that the Christian system would contain no arbitrary or unreasonable appointments: nor does it. The two sacraments are reasonable ordinances: we understand the import and object of them. Instead of being imposed upon unrenewed human nature, they were the seals of Christ's previous fellowship with His chosen Apostles, who, in this point of view, were the representatives of believers in every age. What gives them validity is, not administration by a priestly caste, or, according to a prescribed ritual;—no such appointments are found in Scripture;—but the living faith by which the worthy recipient has already apprehended Christ. In matters of polity, what could not be safely entrusted to the spiritual imbecility of the Jew might well be left to the maturity of Christian understanding in the persons of the Apostles. Or if the supposition be not reasonable that, in so important a matter, the Apostles should be left altogether destitute of guidance, we should yet expect the directions given to be of that general kind which a sovereign furnishes to a person of presumed wisdom and experience about to undertake the administration of the affairs of some newly formed colony. In such a case a general draft of instructions would be delivered, but much would be left to the discretion of the governor. The facts of the case appear to prove that such, in the work of organising Christian societies, was the measure of assistance vouchsafed to the Apostles. In the synagogue they had a platform of polity providentially at hand, fitted, from its peculiar features, to become that of the Church: this polity the Apostles accordingly adopted, with such modifications as appeared to them necessary. But they have neither informed us that, in so doing, they acted according to an express command of Christ; nor do they make their own appointments absolutely, and for ever, binding upon the Church: they enact no *law* at all upon the subject.

If any such law is attributed either to them, or their divine Master, it is not upon the authority of the New Testament Scriptures.

The dispensation under which we are living is that of the Spirit; but "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."* That is to say, since in Christianity revealed religion appears in its maturity, in it also the artificial, arbitrary, service of God, which belongs to a lower stage of spiritual progress, has given place to a free, natural, and reasonable one. They that worship God now must worship Him in spirit and in truth; in spirit as contrasted with the literal prescriptions, and in truth as opposed to the symbolism, of the ceremonial law. Christianity is, primarily, neither a dogma nor a ceremonial, but a life in Christ; and wherever there is life, its visible sphere of agency shapes and develops itself from within, and comes to perfection by a law of spontaneous action, not by the external pressure of a superinduced form.

* 2 Cor. iii. 17.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTOLIC EPISTLES, IN REFERENCE TO THE IDEA OF THE CHURCH.

THE inquiry which has occupied us so long will be fitly brought to a close with some remarks upon the structure and statements of the Apostolic Epistles, in reference to the point before us. These Epistles having been addressed to regularly constituted Christian societies, it is reasonable to suppose that they will throw light upon the question of the nature of the Church; and, moreover, supply what is wanting in previous revelation to complete the doctrine of Scripture upon the subject. For it is the peculiar province of the Apostolic Epistles to set forth fully, and in their various bearings, the doctrines, of which the outlines, or heads, are furnished by Christ himself in His discourses. The first point to be here considered is, what the language of the Epistles teaches us respecting the true idea of a Christian church: after which, some remarks will be made upon the statements of the inspired writers in reference to the mystical body of Christ, and its connexion with the aggregate of Christian societies, which constitute, collectively, the visible Church.

SECTION I.

THE APOSTOLIC CONCEPTION OF A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

WERE the question put to a person of plain understanding, unacquainted with the controversies which have arisen on the subject; What, according to the Apostolic Epistles, is a Christian Church, or how is it to be defined? he would probably, without hesitation or difficulty, reply, that a Christian Church — as it appears, for example, in St. Paul's Epistles — is a congregation or society of faithful men or believers, whose unseen faith in Christ is visibly manifested by their profession of certain fundamental doctrines, by the preaching of the Word, by the administration

and reception of the two sacraments, and by the exercise of discipline. He would direct attention to the fact, that the ordinary greeting of St. Paul, at the beginning of each Epistle, is to the "saints and faithful brethren" constituting the Church of such a place, fellow-heirs with himself of eternal life; and that throughout these compositions, the members of the Church are presumed to be in living union with Christ, reasonings and exhortations being addressed them, the force of which cannot be supposed to be admitted, except by those who are led by the Spirit of God: in short, that the members of the Corinthian or the Ephesian Church are addressed as Christians; and a Christian is one who is in saving union with Christ.

In proportion to the apparent simplicity of the question, would be his surprise to hear it affirmed that he is mistaken, and that, in addressing a Christian society as a congregation of Christians, St. Paul merely regards it as a society of men *professing* the same faith, and participating outwardly in the same Sacraments (it being immaterial to the idea whether they possess saving faith or not); a society invested with spiritual privileges, but not necessarily realising those privileges; and that, consequently, we must lower the import of the terms "saints" and "faithful in Christ Jesus," to signify outwardly dedicated to God, and professing with the lips the doctrines of Christianity.

Such, in fact, is the interpretation very commonly put upon the Apostle's language; and since, if it be the true one, the Protestant definition of a Church—viz. that it is a society of true believers, where the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments are rightly administered—becomes untenable, it is of importance to inquire into this point a little more particularly.

That the mode of interpretation alluded to involves a deviation from the obvious meaning of the New Testament phraseology is not, indeed, sufficient reason for at once rejecting it; but it does warrant us in requiring that the necessity for such deviation shall be clearly made out. And, in the present case, this requirement is the more reasonable, from the circumstance that the Apostles uniformly identify themselves, as regards their Christian standing and hopes, with those to whom they write. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed *us* with all spiritual blessings in Christ;"* "that I may be comforted by the mutual faith both of you and me;"†—did St. Paul, when he thus

* Ephes. i. 3. † Rom. i. 12.

wrote, regard himself as but nominally interested in the blessings of redemption? Was his faith nothing more than a profession of Christian doctrine? If he must have meant something more than this; if his own faith and his own sanctity were living and real, the effect of the Holy Spirit's operation; then, inasmuch as he makes no distinction, as regards this point, between himself and those whom he addresses, we must suppose that he looked upon them also as real saints and believers. The language of the inspired writers of the New Testament is the expression of that Christian experience, or conscious participation in the blessings vouchsafed through Christ, which the Holy Ghost had shed abroad in their hearts: their idea, therefore, of a saint, or a believer, being derived from their own spiritual consciousness, must have been the highest of which the words will admit. But in the sense in which they supposed themselves to be Christians, do they, to all appearance, apply that title to those to whom they write.

It will be urged, however, that there are convincing reasons why we cannot suppose St. Paul to have employed the terms alluded to, and others of similar import, in their highest signification: the principal of those reasons being, first, that the various appellations applied to Christians in the New Testament — such as "saint," "called," "elect," "the sons of God," &c., — being manifestly derived from the elder economy, must be understood to bear the same sense which they did under the law; but under the law, these expressions implied nothing more than the admission of the Jewish people, as a people, to the privileges of the Mosaic covenant, the nation being a nation of "saints," an "elect" nation, and possessing the privilege of adoption, whether the individuals of which it was composed were personally sanctified or not: and, secondly, that every visible Church is, and must be, a mixed body, comprising both tares and wheat, or nominal and true believers, which it is impossible to sever from each other; besides which, it is to be observed that the same persons who, in the beginning of St. Paul's epistles, are described as saints and believers, are, very frequently, in the course of those epistles, severely reprehended for, not only errors in doctrine but, gross inconsistencies in practice; of which the first epistle to the Corinthians presents a striking example.

The plausibility which attaches to the former of these positions, and the frequency with which it is urged in opposition to the teaching of evangelical Protestantism, render it necessary to bestow particular attention upon it. To specify the productions of authors

would be invidious; but there is no reader of modern English theology who will not be able to call to mind works (in other respects of great merit) in which the Law has been so made to expound the Gospel that the meaning of the inspired writers, and especially of St. Paul, has been most successfully diluted into something very different from that which their language appears to convey.

Briefly stated, the argument is as follows:—In the Old Testament the Jews, as a people, and irrespectively of the moral state of individuals, are called the "chosen nation," the "called" of God, the "sons of God"—("Israel is my son, my first-born"), and a holy people, or a people of saints. Now it is evident that none of these terms *necessarily* imply the presence of real—*i. e.* personal—sanctity, for many, perhaps the majority, of those to whom they are applied were not, at any period of the Jewish history, truly pious: we read that even a whole generation was, for its personal demerits, deprived of the privilege of entering the Holy Land. Still, whatever the spiritual state of individuals in the sight of God might be, the whole nation—the unsanctified equally with the sanctified portion of it—was said to be elect, to be consecrated to the service of God, and to enjoy the blessing of adoption. Now since the Apostles were Jews, and Christianity is the historical offspring of Judaism, we must suppose that the Apostles, in applying to Christians the terms above mentioned, attached to them the same meaning which they bore under the Mosaic economy; and that when they called the members of a visible Church elect, believers, saints, or sons of God, they merely meant that such persons, like the Jews of old, had been admitted to certain privileges (*e. g.* the opportunity of hearing the Word, of receiving the Sacraments, and the means of grace generally), which privileges, however, they might reject or despise (that is, they might never advance to saving union with Christ) without detriment to their title of saints and elect. In short, all the members of a visible Church, be their inward state what it may, are equally chosen, and equally saints; for they are all chosen to the same privileges, and to all equally the means of grace are offered, by the due use of which they may become fitted for the inheritance of the saints.

That the fact, as regards the Jews, was as it is stated to be is most certain. It was only in a national and external sense that they were termed the elect, or the called, of God. It was the nation, as such, that was termed holy: it was Israel, not the individual Jew,

of whom it was said that he was the son of God. But is not this very fact sufficient to throw a doubt upon the correctness of the reasoning by which the terms in question are made to mean the same, and nothing more, under the Gospel? For if it be admitted that the Jewish nation, in its corporate aspect, was like all the other parts of the Mosaic economy, *typical* of what was to come, the inference appears to be that, while the same terms may be used under both dispensations, their meaning will be different, according as they are applied to the type or to the antitype.

Here, in fact, is the real source of the error. While the typical character of the Mosaic institutions in general is recognised, it has not been sufficiently borne in mind that the Jewish nation itself, in its external or political aspect, was a type, and nothing more, of the Christian Israel, — that is, as Protestants call it, the invisible Church, and Scripture the mystical body of Christ. In its peculiar relation to Jehovah, as its tutelary God, in its deliverance from Egypt, its wanderings in the wilderness, and its settlement in Canaan, the Hebrew nation was a figure, or symbol, of the true Church of Christ, precisely as the paschal lamb, or the sin-offering, was a figure of the one great sacrifice to be offered up upon the cross. This will be clearly perceived when it is recollected that what passed into Christianity, when the latter became a religion distinct from Judaism, was not the Jewish nation in its corporate capacity, but the pious part of it, those who, like Nathaniel and Simeon, were waiting for the consolation of Israel. The nation, as such, rejected Christ; and for this sin, the national polity, if not existence, was broken up by the destruction of the temple. It is, therefore, not literally, but in its antitype, that the nation survives in Christianity, just as the paschal lamb appears, under the Gospel, not in its proper literal character, but in Him whom it prefigured, — the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. It is a rule, which holds good universally, that whatever belonged to the Jewish people in its corporate capacity — as, for instance, the temple, the priesthood, the Levitical sacrifices, the solemn feasts — passed into Christianity, not in their actual literal form, but spiritually, or as the type becomes realised in the antitype, the shadow in the substance; so that while the names may remain the same, the thing signified by them is altogether different. Thus, for example, the word temple, as used by the inspired writers of the New Testament, signifies, not, as of old, a material building in which the presence of God was symbolically manifested, but, the Church, or body of those among whom Christ dwells by His Spirit, Christians

being the living stones which compose the spiritual building;* so that, wherever Christ, according to His promise, is present in the midst of those assembled in His name, there is now the temple of God. In like manner, the words priesthood, sacrifice, sabbath, and other terms belonging to the Law, are retained under the Gospel; but while thus retained they all undergo an essential modification of meaning, and denote the spiritual realities of which the literal objects signified by them were the type. We have only to extend this undoubted principle of interpretation to the Jewish people itself, in its national—that is, its legal—character, to perceive that the terms by which, in the Old Testament, its privileges are expressed, assume, when applied to Christians, a different meaning, or rather betoken the spiritual realities of which the former were but the types.

The oversight, in short, which is committed in the whole of this reasoning from the Jewish economy to the Christian, is the forgetting, that, while the Jew was a Jew by natural birth, no one is a Christian until he be born again.† Every descendant of Abraham after the flesh was, by the mere fact of his being a Jew by birth, entitled to the privileges, such as they were, of the Mosaic covenant; just as the subjects of this kingdom are, by virtue of their natural birth, entitled to the privileges of Englishmen. Those privileges were, as St. Paul tells us, the possession of "the oracles of God;" the "glory," or visible symbol, of the presence of God in the temple; the "covenants" by which temporal blessings were promised to the obedient; "the service," or prescribed worship of God; and the "promises" of a Saviour to come.‡ These advantages belonged to the nation as such, and upon the enjoyment of them the Jew entered at once, by virtue of his natural birth; consequently, they were possessed equally by the unsanctified and the sanctified part of the nation. True it is that, in the high spiritual sense of the word, he was "not a Jew" which was "one outwardly:" the unsanctified Jew was not a *spiritual* descendant of Abraham,—was not what he ought to have been: nevertheless, the privileges of the Mosaic covenant still belonged to him, because he had received them, not by spiritual, but by natural, birth. In the spiritual sense of the expression, every believing Gentile was as much a son of Abraham as was his believing brother of Jewish origin. Gal. iii. 7; Rom. iv. 11. But under the Christian dispensation, no one is entitled to the privileges of the new covenant by natural birth: no one, unless he be born

* Ephes. ii. 22; 1 Pet. ii. 5. † John, iii. 8. ‡ Rom. ix. 4.

of the Spirit, can see the kingdom of God. And so the whole question ultimately turns, as most of these discussions do, upon the meaning which we are to attach to regeneration, or its equivalent, the new birth. Does it mean a mere admission to Christian privileges—such as the means of grace, the ordinary influences of the Spirit, &c.,—an advantage which may be enjoyed by those who have never experienced what is commonly called a change of heart,—or such an enjoyment of those privileges as necessarily implies inward sanctification by the Spirit? Is the regenerate man one to whom the blessings of the Gospel are merely *offered*, or one who, besides receiving the offer, has accepted it? But upon this point some observations have been already made, to which the reader is referred. There is nothing more certain than that he only is in the New Testament said to be born again, or born of God, who is (or is supposed to be) in saving union with Christ; is sanctified, and led, by the Spirit of Christ; is a new creature, morally as well as mystically; and enjoys that witness of the Spirit with his spirit which is the pledge and foretaste of eternal life. To denude regeneration of its *moral* element—to make it signify the mere act of admission into a visible Church—a thing, that is, which may be possessed equally by those who are and those who are not led by the Spirit of God—is as much at variance with the statements of Scripture as it is with the instinctive feelings of the Christian.*

Perhaps there is no passage which throws greater light upon the point under discussion than Acts, ii. 47., in which it is said, "that the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." Our translation, as is well known, fails to give the simple meaning of the original, which is, that the Lord added to the Church (*τοὺς σωζομένους*) those who were being saved, or who were at the time in a state of salvation: the question of

* For this reason, it is not without concern that the biblical Christian witnesses attempts made, in some quarters, to procure an authoritative declaration that the word regeneration, as used in the book of Common Prayer, and especially in the service for Infant baptism, signifies merely such a change of state as may belong equally to the sanctified and the unsanctified members of a visible church. We may of course attach any arbitrary meaning we please to any scriptural term; but to maintain that by the expression "new birth," as used in Scripture, a state is denoted which does not necessarily imply sanctification by the Holy Spirit, is not to interpret, but to impose an interpretation upon, the Word of God. It is better far that the difficulties and inconsistencies which prevail in our services should remain than that a positive error should be formally introduced. The word "regeneration" in the service for infants means neither more nor less than what it does in the service for adults; the two services being the same, and intentionally so throughout: or if there is a difference, it is only one analagous to that which exists between the infant and the adult—*i. e.* a difference not in *kind*, but in degree, or, rather in the measure of development, which of course varies with the subject.

their perseverance in that state, or their final salvation, being left undecided. That they were brought into "a state of salvation" is all that the passage affirms; but the question is, what did this expression, in their case, imply? Nothing is more common than to hear it explained as signifying merely the being brought within reach of the means of grace, or admitted into a visible Church; a privilege which, of course, may be enjoyed equally by the unrenewed and by the renewed in heart; so that all the members of a Church, however destitute of sanctifying grace, may equally be said to be in a state of salvation. It is certain, however, that in the passage alluded to, the expression means much more than this; for, on inspecting the context, we find that the "saved" who were added to the Church were true penitents and believers. The exhortation of St. Peter was, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins:" "they that gladly received his word"—that is, did repent and accept the offer of salvation—"were baptized; and of such as these, not of the unrenewed in heart, were the daily accessions made to the Church. And, indeed, a moment's reflection will show that "a state of salvation," by the mere force of the words, signifies the state, not of those who *may* be, at some future time, but of those who *are* in the way of being saved; and no one, we know, is in the way of being saved who is not under the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit.* Admission, then, to a visible Church pre-supposed, in the Apostles' times, the existence of a new heart; which is precisely what is affirmed concerning the import of the word regeneration.

It is with a constant reference to the cardinal distinction above mentioned that we are to interpret the expressions which have passed from the Jewish into the Christian economy. Thus to take the instance of the words "elect" and "called," which express the same idea under a slightly different aspect:—the Jewish nation, as a body politic, was chosen out of the nations of the earth to be the repository of the divine oracles, and to be brought into a

* The importance of carefully considering the import of words is strikingly illustrated by the instance mentioned in the text. Most of the difficulties which our catechism is supposed to present will be found to disappear, by simply bearing in mind that the "state of salvation" into which the child thanks God for having been brought means, not merely access to the means of grace, but a state of holiness, a state which, if persevered in, will issue in salvation. The child is supposed to be a penitent, believing, child, so far as a child can repent and believe, and as such, his baptism being supposed to have issued in a real change of heart, he is "a member of Christ" &c. All this is plain enough when we consider that the child prays that God may continue him in the state in which he now is; which cannot therefore be supposed to be an unsanctified state: but the erroneous meaning attached to the expression "a state of salvation" has prevented persons from seeing it.

peculiar relation to Jehovah as its tutelary God: this was a *privilege*, in the strictest sense of the Word, for the revealed knowledge of God was purposely withheld from the rest of the world; and the covenanted advantages connected with it were of a national and temporal kind,—such as the possession of Canaan, and earthly prosperity. Eternal rewards did not belong to the nation as such, but to the pious members of it. The corresponding fact under the Christian economy is, not national, but, individual election; and election, not merely to external connexion with a visible Church, or access to the means of grace (what is to prevent any heathen from placing himself under the preaching of the Word?) but, to the effectual grace of the Holy Spirit renewing the heart. In like manner, when St. Paul speaks of Christians as the "called" of God, he means, not merely that the Gospel invitation has been addressed to them, but that they have accepted it: he takes for granted that the inward call of the Spirit has accompanied the outward one of the Word. Election to the mere possibility, apart from the actual foretaste, of salvation is an idea unknown to the New Testament Scriptures. Living, sanctifying, union with Christ is everywhere presupposed in those who are called the elect of God:—as when St. Paul connects election and calling directly with justification; with the foretaste of glory; with adoption; and with the sanctifying work of the Spirit:* and St. Peter declares that "sanctification by the Spirit," "obedience," "and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," were the blessings to which the Christians whom he addressed were chosen.† Whether the persons addressed were elected to *continue* in the state in which they were then supposed to be; whether their election and calling involved the certainty of their final salvation:—this is another question which has no particular bearing upon the point before us. The introduction of the Calvinistic controversy into the discussion is irrelevant, and has tended to perplex a very simple truth,—viz. that the *present* state of the elect of God is, according to the New Testament, one of conscious participation in the blessings of the Gospel; one which contains in itself the earnest of future bliss, whether we suppose it to be indefectible, or the reverse.‡

* Rom. viii. 30.; Ephes. i. 5.; Col. iii. 12. See also 1 Thes. i. 4, 5. † 1 Pet. i. 2.

‡ "Every Christian is called and elected to the Christian privileges, just as every Jew was to his" . . . . . "there is no such distinction among Christians as the 'called' and the uncalled, the elect and the non-elect."—Whately's Essays, 2d series, Essay III. This remark is perfectly just; only care must be taken to attach to the term "Christian" its proper meaning. A Christian is a "man in Christ," one, that is, who not merely has had certain spiritual blessings proposed to his acceptance, or placed within his reach (if this

The same remarks apply to the term adoption, or sonship, common both to the Law and the Gospel. The Jewish *υἱοθεσία*, or privilege of sonship, belonged to the nation as such, — that is, to all the descendants of Abraham after the flesh, — without reference to any distinction between those of them who were and those who were not renewed in heart. But this "adoption," which belonged to Israel after the flesh, was but a figure of the privilege which the Christian enjoys, just as the "glory" mentioned in the same passage was but a symbol of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the spiritual temple — the Church of Christ. If the prophets sometimes appear to employ the phrase "sons of God" in a more restricted sense, to signify those of the elect nation who were spiritual as well as natural descendants of Abraham, it is only one of the many instances in which prophecy was anticipatory of the Gospel. Under the Christian dispensation, the privilege of adoption is inseparably connected with the *spirit* of adoption, whereby the Christian cries, Abba Father, and which is in him the earnest of the future inher-

were all that was necessary to make a man a Christian, every heathen or Jew living in a Christian country would be entitled to the appellation; for the blessings of salvation are offered to him, are placed within his reach, and he has only to appropriate them), but has *accepted* the offer, and is in the enjoyment of Christian privileges, — viz. the favour of God, the spirit of adoption, sanctification, and the hope of eternal life. Every such Christian, indeed, — that is every real Christian (and such the Apostles took for granted those to be to whom they addressed their epistles) — is one of the called and elected of God. This, however, is not the Author's meaning. By "every Christian" his argument requires that we should understand Christians *of all sorts* — *e. g.* nominal, unsanctified, Christians; every one, in short, who has been initiated into a visible Church, it being immaterial to the idea whether he have saving faith in Christ or not, or even be a secret unbeliever. That such persons have a claim to be regarded as the called, or the elect of God, or the sons of God, in the New Testament sense of the expressions, we must require clearer evidence for believing than has hitherto been produced. But this is the error which pervades the whole of the valuable work alluded to; its foundation being the non-recognition of the scriptural distinction between visible Churches and the mystical body of Christ, a subject which will come under consideration hereafter. Melancthon teaches us the true view of the relation between the Jewish and the Christian dispensation: — Propter has (promissiones corporalium rerum) dicebatur 'populus Dei' etiam mali in his (Judæis), quia hoc carnale semen Deus separaverat ab aliis gentibus per certas ordinationes externas et promissiones: et tamen mali illi non placebant Deo. At evangelium affert non umbram æternarum rerum sed ipsas res æternas, Spiritum Sanctum et justitiam, quâ coram Deo justi sumus. *Igitur illi tantum sunt populus juxta evangelium qui hanc promissionem Spiritus accipiunt.*" Apol. Conf. Aug. cap. 4.

The same theoretical defect pervades certain sections of another valuable work (Sumner's Apostolical Preaching), with the practical conclusions of which all sober interpreters of Scripture must agree. On the subject of "grace," for example, the writer, after quoting several passages in which Christians are addressed as regenerate, as members of Christ, as washed, sanctified, and justified (Rom. vi. 3.; Col. ii. 12; Rom. viii. 5.), observes, that "these addresses and exhortations are founded on the principle that the disciples, by their dedication to God in baptism, had been brought into a state of reconcilement with him, had been admitted to privileges which the Apostles call on them to improve:" whence the

itance: a *Christian* privilege of sonship, apart from the sanctifying work of the Spirit, is a fiction of divines, for which no ground is found in Scripture. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they" (and they only, as the Apostle's meaning obviously is) "are," under the Gospel dispensation, "the sons of God:"* this is the uniform language of the New Testament, from which no passage can be produced in which the expression "sons of God" may not be shown necessarily to presuppose a saving change of heart in those who are thus addressed.

To all this, however, it will be replied that the nature of a visible Church, which we know must in all cases be a body of mixed character, as well as the actual state of several of the churches to whom St. Paul addressed his epistles, forbid the supposition that, in terming them communities of saints and believers, he could have used these words in their highest signification. This is the second difficulty which it is conceived lies in the way of our interpreting the Apostle's language literally. But a moment's reflection will show that the difficulty is only imaginary. We must recollect

conclusion drawn is, that in the present day all the members of every visible Church are, by virtue solely of their consecration to God in baptism, to be regarded as members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. But equity requires that we put not out of view what had taken place in the disciples to whom St. Paul wrote antecedently to their baptism. Had they not been baptized on the presumption that they were penitent believers? And whence came it, that they gave heed to the message of salvation, repented, and believed? Scripture itself informs us,—"The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul" (Acts, xvi. 14): in other words, a special work of grace, antecedent to baptism, accompanied the Word, and made it in their case effectual to produce repentance and faith In addressing a society composed of persons who were supposed to have experienced, previously to baptism, the same work of grace which had taken place in Lydia, it would of course have been out of place to make any distinction between individuals; *all* the members of the Church were supposed to be true believers, and to have been baptized as such: many may have been hypocrites; but they were not baptized as hypocrites or nominal Christians. In short, as remarked in the text, St. Paul addresses Christians according to their profession, according to what, if their profession was sincere, they actually were. How far his expressions are applicable to a church composed of persons baptized in infancy is another question; but it must never be forgotten that this was *not* the case of those to whom St. Paul wrote. Consequently we cannot at once, and without further discussion, argue from the one case to the other: before we can do this, both the practice and the doctrine of infant baptism must be far more clearly established than by the sole aid of Scripture they have hitherto been. The source of the error may be thought to be visible in the following passage from the same work;—"St. Paul authorizes us to believe . . . . that grace sufficient is denied to none to whom *the offer of salvation* is made through faith in Christ Jesus, and who are united to him in baptism." (p. 150.) It is not the mere "offer," but the *acceptance* of Gospel blessings, that prepares men for baptism, and the acceptance of the Gospel implies repentance and faith, or a change of heart in those who accept it. The *offer* of salvation was made to multitudes who never became members even of the visible Church, but remained in their heathenism.

* Rom. viii. 14. 17. Compare Gal. iv. 5. 7.

that in the Apostolic Church an effective discipline—the very idea of which seems to be lost amongst us—existed. By means of this discipline, they having been separated from the society whose overt acts were contrary to their Christian profession, the Apostle, not being endowed with the divine prerogative of inspecting the heart, was compelled to take the rest at their profession, and to deal with them as real Christians, so long as there was no visible, tangible, proof to the contrary. He addressed Christian churches not as they were in fact, but according to the idea: that is, according to what they ought to be. St. Paul was well aware, that, however far the sifting process might be carried, no visible Church could ever be rendered an unmixed community of saints: but the question is, all that man can do towards making the fact correspond with the idea being done, what style of address was then to be adopted? Was the Apostle to attempt a further and more subtle discrimination between those who were *inwardly* tares and the true followers of Christ? The attempt would have been equally vain and presumptuous. He took the only course open to him. Without pronouncing upon the state of individuals in the sight of God, he assumed the whole body to be what it professed to be—a body of real Christians. For it must be remembered that, however far his profession may be from being a true one, every professor of Christianity professes to be a true, not a mere nominal, Christian. Except on this assumption, the Apostle could not have proceeded to enforce Christian duties by Christian motives. A lecturer on colours must take for granted that his hearers possess the faculty of sight: yet he knows that there may be persons born blind amongst them. A Christian addressing a body of professing Christians must assume that they are Christians: otherwise, he has no ground on which to stand. In addressing them as such, he does not presume to say which of them are, and which are not, living members of Christ: he may suspect, he may even be certain, that they are not all what they profess to be; but is he therefore to descend from the high ground of Christian privilege, and take up that of mere nominal professorship? Surely not. The Church is to be designated not from the tares, but from the wheat; not from what it is in fact, (for in fact it is always imperfect), but from what it aims at being; not from its present earthly condition, in which it is always found mixed with heterogeneous elements, but from what it will be at the day of Christ, when a final separation will take place between it and everything which did not really belong to it.

On the same principle it is precisely that forms of prayer or praise, for the use of a visible Church, or congregation, are drawn up. No single congregation, any more than a national Church, is an unmixed assembly of true Christians: yet when a liturgy is to be composed for its use, the assumption must be made that all the members of the assembly are what they profess to be, true believers; and the liturgical form must be made to express sentiments and desires which none but they who are led by the Spirit of God can or do feel. Even an unwritten prayer, offered up in the name of an assembly of worshippers, must be constructed on this principle. It is not, in such cases forgotten, that there are, and must be, tares mingled with the wheat; but the necessity of the case compels us to take no account of the tares, to pass them over in silence. For we cannot compose prayers, or praises, for those who, by the supposition, have no living faith in Christ; we cannot, knowingly and avowedly, put such compositions in the mouth of mere external professors. Here therefore, as in other points, we deal with the congregation, not as it is in fact, but according to the idea. Before the assembly can address itself to the highest work in which it can engage — viz. the worship of God — it must make two suppositions: — first, that a Church is, according to the idea, a community of saints; and, secondly, that itself is such a community. It never is so in point of fact; but that it is not so, is owing to the imperfection inseparable from human discipline; for the Church, had she the power so to do, would separate from herself the unrenewed in heart as well as the vicious in life. Just, then, as it would be erroneous to conclude that, because of the inevitable discrepancy between the fact and the idea, the expressions occurring in our liturgy are to be taken in a lower sense than that which naturally belongs to them, so is it erroneous to suppose that St. Paul, when he addressed the Christians at Ephesus as "saints" and "believers," meant nothing more than a mere external consecration to the service of God, or a mere profession of the Christian faith. In fact, what the Apostle addresses is not so much the local Church, as such, but the local Church regarded as the visible manifestation, in that locality, of the one body of Christ; that part of the mystical body which is visible at Ephesus, or at Corinth. The very form of his salutation seems to indicate this: for it runs, ordinarily, not to the Church of Ephesus, or of Corinth, but to the "saints and faithful brethren at," or in, those cities.

Nor is there any weight in the objection that many of these

primitive Churches were very defective in doctrine, or in practice, or in both; that St. Paul speaks of the Corinthians as being, on account of their divisions, "carnal," and not "spiritual," as babes in Christ, and sharply reproves them for their laxity of discipline in the case of the incestuous person, and their want of decency in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. For it is not maintained that the first Christians, any more than those of our own day, were, or could be, perfect; and all that can fairly be gathered from what St. Paul says of the Corinthians is that they were imperfect and inconsistent. In the remarks sometimes made upon this subject, it seems to be assumed that there is no medium between our affirming of persons that they are not perfect Christians, and that they are not Christians at all; whereas, in fact, there is no Christian, however holy, who comes up to the ideal of Christian practice. "He that is born of God doth not commit sin:" it is self-evident that we must limit a statement of this kind so as to square with other statements of Scripture, and the facts of Christian experience; and interpret it to mean, that no true Christian willingly commits sin, that in every one who is born of God sin is a conquered foe, or, in popular language, the heart is changed; but, after all these necessary limitations, there remains the great, the fundamental, distinction between him who is born of God and him who is not, — him whose heart is changed, and him in whom no saving change has as yet taken place. A Christian may be deficient in many points of practice, and yet be a true Christian notwithstanding. To return to the case of the Corinthians: — on what principle, let us ask, did St. Paul reprove them for their inconsistencies? Did he address them as absolutely destitute of the vital principle of grace, or as possessing it, but needing exhortation to walk conformably thereto? The latter is, unquestionably, the ground which he takes. The Corinthians, with all their defects, were supposed to be saints and faithful brethren in Christ: the whole of the Apostle's admonitions are grounded upon that supposition, and to all save real Christians would have been *unintelligible*, or at least without weight. The very metaphor which he uses to signify their imperfect state proves this; for when he calls them "babes in Christ," he evidently supposes that they possessed the principle of life, though but imperfectly developed: a babe is not indeed a man, but neither is it a corpse. Even the incestuous person may have fallen from a state of grace; for the case of David proves how unable we are to assign limits to the extent to which sin may

prevail, for a time, over the man of God:—but, however this may be, it must be remembered that this person was, when St. Paul wrote, no longer regarded by him as even in visible communion with the Church, the Apostle having "judged already concerning him who" had "so done this deed, to deliver such a one to Satan;"* and the sentence of excommunication subsequently pronounced by the Church being but the ratification of that which had previously issued from St. Paul.

Let it be supposed, in short, that an effective discipline existed in our Church, and that an absent pastor was addressing an epistle to the communicants of his flock, by what title would he address them? All that could be done by human means towards making the visible Church and the body of Christ in that particular locality identical (which, however, is never really the case) being supposed to be done, he must necessarily treat those to whom he writes as, collectively, saints and believers: because, as far as man's eye can discern, they are so: and, in using these terms, what he would mean is, that they are real saints and believers: on no other ground could he proceed to administer, as the case might require, exhortation, reproof, or consolation.

Thus it appears that what it has become, in some quarters, the practice to designate as the "dissenting" view is, in fact, nothing but the teaching of Scripture, as well as the conclusion of reason. A modern writer, for example, speaks of it as one of the peculiarities of dissenters that their Church membership presupposes internal sanctity and true faith:—"the design and intention of dissenters is to admit none but really regenerate and holy men into their Churches, &c." The argument by which their principle is proved to be erroneous is as follows:—baptism is the rite of admission to the privileges of the Church; "but the only conditions for baptism were repentance and faith: there was no mention made of regeneration, sanctity, real piety, whether visible or invisible, as prerequisites to its reception: those who were baptized came to the holy fountain, as repentant sinners, not as professing saints," &c.† No mention of regeneration, when candidates for baptism were supposed to be repentant believers! What is regeneration in its moral —that is, its essential—aspect but such a work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart as produces repentance and faith? What other regeneration existed before Christ came? What is "real piety" but the same repentance and faith? And are not repentance and

* 1 Cor. vii. 3—5.

† Palmer on the Church, vol. i. p. 312.

faith the essential elements of *Christian* sanctity, not only at the beginning, but throughout the whole, of the Christian's course? So fallacious is the writer's reasoning against what he terms the dissenting theory. "Such a system," he continues, "could never compose a Church of professing saints only." That a visible Church can never be composed of saints only is admitted on all hands; but it will be something new to the readers of Scripture to be told that a Church does not consist even of *professing* saints; which is equivalent to saying that sanctity is not a note of the Church; or that, as Rome teaches, its definition comprises equally the evil and the good. By parity of reasoning, it might be maintained that because a field of wheat has tares mixed with it, it is therefore not to be described as a field of wheat. Finally we are informed, in the same work, that "the Church of England, acting on a different principle" (from dissent) "admits persons of all sorts and ages" to baptism. That she admits "persons of all ages" is true; but not so that she admits persons "of all sorts," if the meaning be, as it evidently is, that she is indifferent to the inward state of those to whom she administers baptism: for, where repentance and faith can be exercised, she requires them both as conditions of that sacrament. Were she to dispense with them, she would openly proclaim herself to be a society not even of professing saints and believers — that is, she would abnegate one of the essential attributes of the Church of Christ.

Section II.

THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST AS DISTINGUISHED FROM VISIBLE CHURCHES. THE PROTESTANT DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE CHURCH.

But while we see no reason to believe that the Apostles, in calling a Church a community of saints or believers, employed these expressions in any other than the highest sense, we cannot, on the other hand, suppose that they could be ignorant of the fact, that no visible church perfectly corresponds to its idea, or that which it professes to be. It might be expected, therefore, that, in order to mark the distinction between the Church as it is visible and the

Church in its truth, — that is, as defecated from extraneous admixtures; the Church as it is now, and the Church as it will be at the day of Christ; they would employ different language, according as the Church in its former or in its latter aspect is the subject of their discourse. This leads us to make some remarks upon the scriptural distinction between a visible Church, or an aggregate of such churches, and the Mystical Body of Christ; a distinction which, as might be expected, Romanists are as much interested in denying as Protestants in maintaining.

Nor is it only Romanists who treat the distinction as a fictitious, or, at least, an unscriptural, one. There are many amongst ourselves whose tendencies are in the opposite extreme to that of Romanism, but who, from their taking an external view of the Church, and regarding it as, in its idea, a community of professing Christians (it being indifferent to the definition whether they be Christians in deed and in truth, or not), verge on this point towards the teaching of Rome. It is, on this account, the more important to examine whether the objections that have been urged against the distinction alluded to are well-founded.

What is affirmed in opposition to the statements of the Protestant formularies amounts to this: — that while, undoubtedly, a distinction must be made between those members of any visible Church whose holy lives prove that they are inwardly renewed by the Holy Spirit and those who give evidence that they are not, — between the living and the dead branches of the vine, — it is neither proper nor scriptural to speak of the former in their collective capacity, — that is, regarded as the body of true believers scattered over the world, — as constituting a Church in a sense of the word different from that which belongs to the visible societies of professing Christians. A question of this kind can only be decided by a reference to the language of Scripture: to which, therefore, we turn.

Writers have enumerated various senses which the word ἐκκλησία is found to bear in the New Testament; — as, for example, it sometimes denotes a company of Christians, small enough to meet for social worship in a single house; * sometimes a larger society, comprehended within the limits of a city, as the Church of Corinth, or of Rome, whether the society consists of one or of several congregations; and occasionally the whole body of professing Christians in the world, — the visible Church Catholic. † An attentive

* Rom. xvi. 5.

† Barrow (Discourse concerning the unity of the Church) mentions this as one of the

examination, however, of the various passages in which it occurs leads to the conclusion that there are only two really distinct senses which the word bears in Scripture; according as it is used to signify either one or more Christian societies, or the Church which is described as the body, or the bride, of Christ.

That the ordinary acceptation of the word is that in which it denotes either a single congregation or an aggregate of such congregations under a common government is true: it could hardly be otherwise, seeing the apostolic epistles are addressed, for the most part, to local churches, and are chiefly taken up in expounding the duties of Christians as members of such visible societies. But though not so common, the other use of the word is far too frequent and too remarkable to be overlooked; and the language of the inspired writers, especially of St. Paul, when speaking of the Church in this latter acceptation, is such as to establish a broad line of demarcation between it and every other.

The following passages are some of those in which the word occurs, in what has been called, though not very accurately, its abstract sense:—"Feed the church of God which is among you, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts, xx. 28.):—"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Ephes. v. 25.): "And gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephes. i. 22, 23.): "And He is the head of the body, the church" (Colos. i. 18.) "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15.): "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven" (Heb. xii. 22, 23.). Our Lord Himself, in one of the two passages, to which allusion has been made, uses the word "church" in a sense exactly similar to that in which it occurs in these passages of St. Paul's Epistles:—"On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it:" while in the other, "Tell it unto the church," He as obviously

senses in which the word is used in Scripture; but it is doubtful whether any clear instance of this usage can be produced. The passages cited by Barrow do not seem to bear out his statement.

alludes to a local society of Christians. (See Matt. xvi. 18. and xviii. 17.).

The mystical and figurative language by which the Church is here described proves that the object before the Apostle's mind was something very different from that denoted by the expressions "the church of the Thessalonians," or "the churches of Galatia," —that is, either a single local church or the aggregate of local churches in a certain district, or throughout the world. Never are the appellations "body of Christ," "bride of Christ," "temple of the living God," "Mount Sion," &c., bestowed upon a local church, or a collection of local churches *as such*. But it may be proper to point out more particularly the essential points of distinction between this and the more ordinary acceptations of the term.

The Church, then, in the abstract sense of the word, is always spoken of as one; one as distinguished from a plurality of churches. There may exist, at any given time, a greater or a less number of local christian societies; but there cannot be two bodies, or two brides, of Christ; there cannot be two temples of the Holy Ghost (in a different sense from that now under consideration each individual Christian may be called a temple of God. See 1 Cor. vi. 19.); nor can there be two cities of the living God.

Still more important is it to observe that the Church, in this mystical sense, is spoken of not only as one, but as, in the strict sense of the word, one society; that is, it has a centre of unity, and a common government. This is what essentially distinguishes the "body of Christ" from the aggregate of local churches in the world, or visible Christendom. The expression Catholic Church may be, as it commonly is in the Fathers, very fitly used to denote the whole or the totality of the churches which make up, at any given time, visible Christendom; but all, save Romanists, hold that the aspect which visible Christendom is ordinarily to present, is that, not of one visibly organised society, but of a collection of societies founded on certain common principles: the Catholic Church in this sense being nothing but an aggregate of local Christian societies, distinct from and independent of each other. But there is something more than this involved in the figurative terms "body of Christ" or "spiritual house," by which the Church "in the sense of the word of which we are speaking" is commonly described. The human body is not a multiplication of one particular member, but an organised whole, consisting of many different members, which, by reason of their connexion with one common head, and with each other, as being all animated by one com-

mon principle of life (descending, according to the ancient theories of physiology, from the head) constitute, though many, but one body. In like manner a building, such as the temple of Jerusalem, is not a mere pile of loose stones, but a structure in which each particular stone fills its appointed place; the whole exhibiting unity of design, and a combination of parts. In these images there is clearly an idea involved which does not belong to the sum total of local churches in the world; and that idea is, Organic Unity under one Head, as distinguished from a mere aggregation of similar atoms.

Romanism, we know, teaches that the fact implied in these and similar images is actually exhibited in the visible organisation of the Papal Church under one visible Head; and undoubtedly the constitution of that Church does present a correspondence with the idea of the body of Christ as set forth in Scripture: Protestantism also, as we shall see, has its own satisfactory solution of the difficulty: but it is not easy to see how they can extricate themselves from embarrassment who, on the one hand, reject the Romish doctrine of a universal visible Church under one visible head, and, on the other, refuse to admit the Protestant distinction between the mystical body of Christ and the visible Churches of Christendom. There must be something to correspond with the statements of Scripture on this point; and it seems clear that the mere totality of local Christian societies does not satisfy them. The Romanist has here the advantage, not of genuine Protestantism — the Protestantism of the Reformation — but of that lower type of doctrine which in this country, especially during the latter part of the seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth centuries, succeeded to the teaching of the Reformers.

As the characteristic of the mystical body of Christ is organic unity under one head, so the component members of it are not churches, but individuals. Such passages as the following, descriptive of the union of the members with the head and with each other, are manifestly inapplicable to Christian societies, *as such*. "The Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love:"* "Not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit

* Ephes. iv. 15, 16.

together, increaseth with the increase of God:" * "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit:" † "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones are built up a spiritual house." ‡ The union of the members with the Head here described is such, that the vital energy which animates the whole body flows directly, and by virtue of a real incorporation, from the Head into each member; a kind of union of which, as it is evident, a society, as such, is incapable. Between a local church, or a collection of such churches, and Christ there is no vital, organic, connexion, such as exists between the members of the human body and the head, or between the branches of a tree and the tree itself: it is individual believers who are in Christ, as the branches are in the vine; it is into individuals, and not into communities as such, that the influences of the Spirit are derived from the Head. There is, in reality, no such thing as Christ's dwelling in the Church, if the Church be viewed as an abstraction, and something distinct from the individuals of which it is composed: an evident truism when stated, but the overlooking of which has been the source of multifarious error. If Christian communities, as such, may be said to have Christ as their Head, it is not by direct union, but mediately; that is, it is because the individuals of which they are composed are, presumptively at least, in life-giving union with Him: the societies are churches of Christ, but it is the individuals who compose them that are (if they be in truth what they profess to be) members of Christ's body.

Such are some of the peculiarities which in Scripture are connected with the Church when it is spoken of in its essential unity, as the body of which Christ is the head; peculiarities which, as has been observed, are never found attaching to local Christian communities. When these latter come under consideration as communities, we find ourselves amidst questions of quite a different kind. We no longer hear St. Paul speaking concerning the mystical union between Christ and His people; but concerning the duties of the society as a Church of Christ; as for example, the proper mode of exercising discipline; the importance of preserving order and decency in the public assemblies of Christians;

* Col. ii. 19. † Ephes. ii. 20 — 22. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

rules for the treatment of the weaker brethren; and (in the pastoral epistles) directions concerning the appointment of pastors. In this latter point of view, the Church comes before us as a society, or a number of societies, having a local, earthly, existence, and subject to the conditions which belong to all human societies.

It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion, that, between these two aspects under which the Church is presented to view, there is a distinction, and a real one. It has been urged, indeed, that St. Paul, when he speaks of the Church as the body of Christ, is only taking an abstract view of the subject; and this is true, if by abstract be meant remote from sense; but if the word is to be understood in its strict meaning, the assertion does not appear to be correct. An abstraction is, properly, something which has no objective existence: it is the result of that mental operation by which we throw off from individuals, or species, the properties wherein they differ, and designate what is common to them by a single term: thus the term "man" expresses what remains after we have put aside from our view the various differences of country, family, person, &c., by which the individuals of the human race are distinguished from each other. To maintain that St. Paul, when he spoke of the one Church, had in his mind a mere abstraction of this kind, is to do violence to the language of Scripture; and, indeed, ultimately tends to the making Christ himself an abstraction; for if the body of which He is the head has no objective existence, it seems to follow that neither has the head Himself.

It has been suggested also that the mystical language which the inspired writers sometimes use in reference to the Church is intended merely to teach us what the visible Church *ought* to be, or to describe, by anticipation, what the Church of the redeemed will be hereafter in a state of bliss. It is perfectly true that the visible Church, or, more accurately, the sum total of visible Churches, *ought* to be identical with the body of Christ, though, even if that were the case, the latter would still remain, as regards its proper corporate unity under its glorified Head, invisible: nor is it to be denied that the language of Scripture, when the one Church is the subject of consideration, applies rather to its final state of perfection than to its present condition: still the explanation in question is liable to the objection above mentioned, — viz. that it does away with the actual objective existence of that which the inspired writers do positively affirm to exist. For though the visible Church *ought* to be a perfect manifestation of the true Church, that

is, ought to be one with it, it never is so in fact, as the prophetical parables of the tares, and the fish, which describe the permanent condition, not of the body of Christ, but of every local church, so plainly teach us. There cannot, in this life, be a perfect separation between the evil and the good; hence the actual state of every visible church is a mixed state, and every attempt to separate the chaff from the wheat, before the appointed time, must end in failure. The local churches of Christendom, therefore, can never be said to constitute a body, the characteristic of which is that each member is vitally incorporated in Christ, and a partaker of the divine influences which flow from Him: unless indeed we are prepared to maintain, with the Romish catechism, that a man may be a member of Christ who has not, and never has had, sanctifying faith in Christ, and whose Christianity consists in the outward reception of the Sacraments. But St. Paul, when he speaks of the mystical body of Christ, speaks of an existing reality; not indeed cognisable by sense, any more than Christ Himself is, but not on that account the less possessing a substantive existence: he not only sets before Christians, and local churches, what they ought to be, but announces the fact — indeed, it may be called a doctrine — that, whether this or that church be in a better or worse condition; whether local Christian societies disappear, like the seven churches of Asia, altogether from the world, or continue to exist; the body of which Christ is the Head, communicating to every member of it His life-giving grace, is, and always shall be, in existence, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

It is obvious that the same objection lies against the other mode of interpretation, — viz. that the inspired writers, when they describe the Church as the body, or the bride, of Christ, refer to a state of things which belongs altogether to another world. This hypothesis, like the former, does away with the present existence of Christ's body upon earth, and robs the Christian of that object of faith which is expressed in the article of the Creed, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." What the Apostles speak of as actually in existence becomes a mere "platonic republic," which no one can expect to see realised in this world.

Moreover, this latter interpretation of the passages in question leads ultimately to, if it is not founded upon, an error which, as we shall see hereafter, also pervades the Romish theory of the Church; — that of disjoining from each other what are but parts of one and the same body, — the Church militant upon earth and the Church triumphant above. That part of Christ's

body which is upon earth is essentially one with that part of it which consists of departed saints; one as regards the earnest, if not the full, possession of the inheritance; one as regards all the essential properties and privileges of the new creature in Christ, though, no doubt, in a different stage of maturity: hence, whatever present reality of spiritual blessings belongs to the latter, belongs also to the former. In both parts of His body, if not in equal measure and fulness, Christ dwells by His Spirit, communicating to each member of it, whether upon earth or in paradise, His quickening grace: of both He is, in the same sense, the Head. Hence, when Christians upon earth are spoken of as heirs of God, as risen with Christ, as glorified, what is meant is, not merely that they ought to be, and may be, if not wanting to themselves, partakers of these spiritual blessings, but that they *are* so; that they actually have within them the earnest of future glory, though but the earnest of it; have actually risen with Christ to a new and heavenly life, and with Him, their glorified Head, have sat "down in the heavenly places;" and are actually glorified, in such a sense as that there is implanted in them that germ of spiritual life which, if it be not prematurely blighted, will certainly and naturally develope itself into the glory to come.* The kingdom of Christ is upon earth as well as in heaven; and that part of the body of Christ which is in its present earthly stage of existence is as much an existing reality as the other part of it which no longer belongs to this world.

It is admitted that the portion of Christ's body which is upon earth is, as compared with that above, imperfect, — imperfect in many points of view: in its condition, as being here mixed with heterogeneous elements which in the life to come will be separated from it; in its sanctity, for no Christian is in this life without sin; and as regards the enjoyment of its privileges, for though the Christian possesses the earnest of the glory to come, it is but an earnest, and can be no more, until "the redemption of the body" at the day of Christ. But it does not follow that because a thing is imperfect, it does not exist. The child is imperfect as compared with the man; nevertheless he possesses all the essential properties of a human being. That part of Christ's body which is upon earth is in the infancy of the spiritual life, but it lacks none of the essential elements of that life; and it is one, not merely in hope,

* See 2 Cor. i. 22. and v. 5.; Ephes. i. 13, 14. Pearson (on the Creed, Art. 6.) well remarks, "the very name of head hath the signification, not only of dominion, but of union; and therefore while we look upon him at the right hand of God, *we see ourselves in heaven.*"

but in fact, with the community of "spirits of just men made perfect." The Christian, though he has "not attained," neither is "already perfect,"* belongs even now, by virtue of his union with Christ, the glorified Head, to "the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven."†

In short, if it be admitted that the Church militant and the Church triumphant are but parts of one and the same body, it follows necessarily that whatever properties or attributes we ascribe to the latter, we must also ascribe, with the limitations just mentioned, to the former; if the one part has a real existence, so has the other; if the one be in vital union with Christ the common Head, so is the other; if the one be, as regards its sanctity, perfected, the other is in process of being so; otherwise, we make Christ's body, as Augustin expresses it, "bipartitum," or to consist of heterogeneous parts.

The remarks upon the subject made by the Catholics in their conference with the Donatists are so much to the purpose that they may here find a place. Augustin, to whom we are indebted for a record of the conference, tells us that, among other objections which the Donatists urged against the Catholic doctrine concerning the Church visible, — viz. that it is a mixed body, — they accused their adversaries of "making two churches, one that which now has evil men mixed with it, the other that which after the resurrection will be wholly pure; as if they who were to reign with Christ in glory were not the self-same saints who now, for His sake, bear with the wicked, with whom they are in external conjunction." To this the Catholics replied, that "they never intended to affirm that the Church of Christ which now has evil men commingled with it" (*i. e.* that part of His body which is militant upon earth) "is distinct from the Church above in which no evil is found; that what they meant was, *that the self-same Church, the one Holy Church, exists under different conditions according as we view it as here upon earth or above in heaven:* here it has an admixture of evil men; there it has not: just as it may be called, while upon earth, mortal, inasmuch as it is composed of men liable to death; while, in another state, it will be immortal, its members being no longer subject to the law of mortality; and yet it is one and the same Church."‡ The substance of which reply is, that the saint here differs from the same saint in another state, not essentially, but in

* Phil. iii. 11 – 14.

† Heb. xii. 23.

‡ Aug. Brev. Coll. ss. 19, 20.

certain accidents belonging to his present condition; accidents which do not affect the real oneness of the two parts of Christ's body.

It appears, then, that there is scriptural foundation for the distinction between the Church as the mystical body of Christ and the Church as an aggregate of local Christian societies; and we may add, in the words of Hooker, that "for lack of diligent observing the difference, the oversights are neither few nor light that have been committed." * Romanism disposes of the difficulty by putting aside all that Scripture says concerning visible churches as separate, independent, communities, and applying its statements respecting the mystical body of Christ to the visible community of which the Pope is the head: they who reject the Romish theory, and yet deny the distinction, are compelled to resort to artificial explanations of the language of the inspired writers, and to suppose that they describe a thing which has not, and cannot have, any real existence on earth. † The distinction being admitted, all becomes clear. The Apostles speak of visible churches, as the churches of Rome or Corinth; but they also speak of one body, which is united to one Head, and governed by one Spirit: if there is not here, to say the least, a twofold aspect under which the Church is viewed, it is difficult to say what meaning we are to attach to the language of Scripture. The twofold aspect is, as has been said, the Church as it is visible and the Church in its truth; the distinction which Scripture makes being, we may presume, expressly intended to impress upon us the fact that the two are not absolutely identical;

* Eccles. Pol. lib. iii. 9.

† "The single persons professing faith in Christ are members of the particular churches in which they live, and all those particular churches are members of the general and universal Church, which is one by unity of aggregation, and this is the church in the creed in which we believe."— Pearson on the Creed, art. 9. Without entering into the question what we are to understand by the Church of the Creed, it may be observed that if Pearson is to be understood as affirming in this passage that the one true Church is identical with the aggregate of visible churches in the world, his language does not appear to be accurate. There is, no doubt, a legitimate sense, in which we may speak of the visible church catholic, meaning thereby the sum total of local Christian communities; but the question is, does this satisfy the language of the inspired writers in reference to the body of Christ? Scripture speaks of a higher kind of unity than a mere unity of "aggregation."— Compare Ephes. i. 22, 23.; Col. i. 18., ii. 19. The process of idealizing, so to speak, the expressions of Scripture upon this subject has been carried to the highest pitch by a modern German writer— Rothe, who, in an otherwise extremely valuable work (Anfänge der Christlichen Kirche), maintains that what St. Paul calls the body of Christ was in the Apostle's time but an idea, an idea which did not become realised until the episcopal system was introduced, — *i. e.* towards the close of the first century; in other words, that the Apostle is to be understood as speaking by a prolepsis, or in the language of anticipation.

that with the Church as it appears in the world, elements are in conjunction which do not belong to it as the body of Christ, — that is, as regarded according to its true idea. In the latter point of view, the Church, though it has a real, substantive, existence, is, as a body, not visible, because no human eye can discern that which makes it really the body of Christ, — viz. vital union with Christ: hence the expression "mystical body," which signifies that the object denoted by it is one, not of sight, but of faith.

Do we, then, make the true Church absolutely invisible, or affirm that there are two Churches, one visible, the other invisible? In answering these questions, we shall be led to make some observations upon the Protestant doctrine of the invisible Church, respecting which so much misapprehension has prevailed; as well as upon the connexion between the Church visible and the Church invisible, or the manner in which the latter becomes visible.

It must be admitted that the expression "invisible Church," commonly adopted in the Protestant formularies and in the writings of the reformers, was unhappily chosen; for it gave occasion to the papal theologians to charge their adversaries sometimes with reducing the Church to a platonic republic, having no actual existence, and sometimes with making two distinct Churches, — a visible and an invisible one. Yet the meaning of the expression is sufficiently clear, and involves nothing absurd or inconsistent. When Protestants speak of the invisible Church, what they mean is, the mystical body of Christ as distinguished from local churches; and when they say that the body of Christ, or the true Church, is invisible, they mean nothing more than that that which makes us members of the body of Christ, or of the true Church — viz. saving faith in Christ — is invisible: it is but another mode of expressing the truth that, not outward participation of the Sacraments, but inward, and therefore invisible, union with Christ is that in which the essential being of the Church lies; and that, consequently, they only are, in the full sense of the words, of the Church who are in Christ by a living faith, and are under the influence of His Spirit. Accordingly, the reformers would have better expressed their meaning, and avoided the risk of misrepresentation, had they, instead of saying that the true Church is invisible, simply affirmed that that which constitutes the true being of the Church is invisible. That this was the idea intended to be conveyed by a somewhat inconvenient terminology is abundantly evident from the earlier Protestant confessions, in which that terminology is not as yet found: the Tetrapolitan confession (A. D. 1530), for

example, which nowhere speaks of the Church as being invisible, while yet it clearly intimates in what sense that phrase, which afterwards became a common one, is to be understood. "*Although that,*" it says, "*which makes the Church of Christ what it is,—viz. faith in Christ—is invisible,* the Church itself is visible, and can be known by its fruits." *

In the following passage from Bishop Taylor's Dissuasive from Popery, the reader will find a clear exposition of the Protestant view on the point under discussion. "The Church of God are the body of Christ; but the mere profession of Christianity makes no man a member of Christ; neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything in Christ Jesus; nothing but a new creature; nothing but a faith working by love, and keeping the commandments of God. Now they that do this are not known to be such by men; but they are known only to God; and therefore it is in a true sense 'the invisible Church;' not that there are two Churches, or two societies, in separation from each other; or that one can be seen by men, and the other cannot; for then, either we must run after the Church whom we ought not to imitate, or be blind in the pursuit of the other that can never be found; and our eyes serve for nothing but to run after false fires. No, these two Churches are but one society; the one is within the other; they walk together to the house of God as friends; they take sweet counsel together, and eat the bread of God in common; but yet, though the men be visible, *yet that quality and excellence by which they are constituted Christ's members,* and distinguished from mere professors and outsides of Christians, is not visible. All that really and heartily serve Christ *in abdito,* do also profess to do so; but the invisible Church ordinarily and regularly is part of the visible, *but yet that only part that is the true one; and the rest but by denomination of law, and in common speaking,* are the Church,—not in mystical union—not in proper relation, to Christ: they are not the house of God—not the temple of the Holy Ghost—not the members of Christ; and no man can deny this. Hypocrites are not Christ's servants, and therefore not Christ's members; and therefore no part of the Church, but *improperly and equivocally,* as a dead man is a man; all which is perfectly summed up in those words of St. Austin, saying, 'that the body of Christ is not bipartitum: it is not a double body: non enim revera Domini corpus est, quod

* "Id unde habet quod vere ecclesia Christi sit, nempe fides in Christum."—Conf. Tetrap. c. 15.

cum illo non erit in æternum: all that are Christ's body shall reign with Him for ever.'" *

The true Church, or body of Christ, is, according to Protestantism, invisible, inasmuch as that which makes us members of it — viz. vital union with Christ — is invisible, and none can know with certainty who are thus in union with Christ, and who are not. He who does know "them that are His," and could at any moment separate the wheat from the chaff, will not, we know, do so until He comes again to judgment. Then, indeed, the "manifestation of the sons of God" will take place, and the holy Catholic Church, at present an object of faith, will become an object of sight; but until then, it is, as regards its proper organic unity, or in its corporate capacity, invisible. How, then, does its existence become known; for, as we have seen, the Protestant confessions, not less than the catechism of Trent, affirm that it is, in one sense, visible? We reply that the one true Church becomes visible, not in its proper unity under Christ its Head, but under the *form of particular congregations or churches*, which are one by virtue of their presumed and, if they are true churches of Christ, actual and inseparable connexion with the one body of Christ.† The latter, invisible in its proper corporate capacity, appears or becomes visible at Jerusalem, Corinth, Rome, England, &c., whether the Christian society at each of those places consist of one congregation or of an aggregate of congregations under a common government. Here we see the true import of the Protestant 'notes' of the Church. The Protestant confessions assign no notes to the one true Church: were they to do so, they would be taking up the ground which the adversary occupies: what they assign notes to are the visible churches of Christ, concerning which they affirm that that is a true Church in which the Word is purely preached, and the Sacraments duly administered. And they do so, because they believe that wherever the pure Word is

* Part ii. book i. s. i. The following statements of Gerhard also place the subject in a clear light: — "Distinguimus inter ecclesiam particularem et catholicam. Particulares ecclesias visibiles esse non negamus, Catholicam autem invisibilem asserimus. — Militans ecclesia est quidem hominum societas, qui quatenus prædicatione Verbi et administratione Sacramentorum, utpote visibilibus et externis signis, in unam societatem colliguntur, ecclesiam visibilem constituunt; sed quatenus ad ecclesiam catholicam pertinent, interno, spirituali, et invisibili fidei, spei, et caritatis vinculo cum capite suo et inter sese invicem colliguntur; *quod vinculum et quæ connexio cum sit invisibilis, ex eo efficitur catholicam ecclesiam esse invisibilem.*" Loc. 23. ss. 79. & 82.

† "Donatistæ Scripturarum testimonio unam ecclesiam commendarunt, velut contra duas quas catholicos affirmasse jactabant; responsum est a catholicis etiam multas ecclesias in Scripturâ inveniri, et septem ad quas Joannes scribit, *quæ tamen multæ illius unicæ membra esse intelligerentur.*" — Aug. Brev. Coll. s. 20.

preached. and the Sacraments admistered, there there will be a part of Christ's body; the presence of which, actual, or at any rate presumed, makes the local Christian society a true Church. The Word and the Sacraments are the means by which the new life is both imparted and sustained: we are certain, therefore, with the certainty of faith, that wherever these means are in active operation, the Spirit of God will by them both generate the sons of God and nourish them unto life eternal; certain, consequently, not that the local church, *as such*, is a part of Christ's body, but that *there*, in that locality there will be a portion of the latter. The local church remains a true church, whatever be the inward state of its members, so long as in it are found the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments; but it is a part of *the* true Church only so far as it actually is what it professes to be, — "a congregation of faithful men," or saints.

The point of inseparable connexion between the Church as invisible and the same Church as visible will now be understood. It is this: — the members of Christ's body are never to be sought for save in the visible Churches of Christ: extra cœtum vocatorum non sunt quærendi electi. The true Church cannot, at present, manifest itself otherwise than under the form of local Christian communities; where they are, therefore, there, and not elsewhere, it is.

The Donatists attempted to make the true Church visible, and found themselves unable to explain the parables of the tares and the fish: Protestants, while they make the true Church, as *such*, invisible, teach that it is never found separated — never is in this life separable — from its visible manifestation, local churches.* If we are asked *which* is the body of Christ? we cannot, like the Romanist, give an answer: we cannot say that this, or that, visible community is entitled to the appellation: but if the question be, *where* is the body of Christ? we reply, it is there wherever there exists a true Church of Christ. We not only affirm that it actually exists upon earth, but we assign the visible notes of its existence — the pure preaching of the word and the administration of the Sacraments; for we believe that where these instruments of the Spirit's work are faithfully employed, in that place there will be a portion of the true Church of Christ, — the real source of all that is visible in the local Christian society.

* "Ecclesia vocatorum latior est quam electorum, quia multi vocati, pauci electi. Matt. xx. 16. *Quicunque igitur pertinent ad ecclesiam invisibilem, id est, quotounque sunt electi, illi etiam sunt vocati;* sed non contra." — J. Gerhard. loc. 23. c. 7. s. 70.

In maintaining, then, the distinction between the visible and the invisible Church, we do not, as Bellarmin untruly alleges, make two Churches, or even, as some of our own divines speak, one society within another:* it is one and the same Church that is the subject of consideration, only regarded from different points of view, ἔσωθεν and ἔξωθεν, from within, and from without.† It is the same persons that, materially, constitute both the one and the other; but the *modus existendi* is different in each. So far forth as the Christian is a professor of the doctrine of Christ, and in communion with a local Christian society, he is a member of the visible Church, and he remains so, whatever be his inward state, until he be excommunicated: so far forth as he is a living member of Christ, he belongs to the invisible Church, or to the Church in its truth. In the case of the true Christian the two *modi existendi* are united; in the case of the hypocrite they are disjoined; for though the latter may have outward communion with a Church, he is not a member of the body of Christ. What is affirmed is, that, inasmuch as the one true Church can, in the present life, manifest its existence only under the form of local Christian societies, it and its visible manifestation are never so precisely identical that we can at once predicate of the aggregate of such societies that they constitute the Saviour's mystical body: of this they are indeed a manifestation, but, inasmuch as they contain, in external union with themselves, that which does not properly appertain to the Church of Christ, and which yet is inseparable from it in its present condition as the Church militant here upon earth, the manifestation is but an inadequate, and imperfect, one. This is all that is really meant by the distinction between the

* "For because this visible Church doth enfold the other" (the invisible) "as one floor the corn and the chaff," &c. — Barrow, Unity of the Church.

† "Nequaquam introducimus duas ecclesias ἀντιδιῃρημένως sibi invicem oppositas, ita ut visibilis et invisibilis ecclesiæ sint species contradistinctæ, sed unam eandemque ecclesiam respectu diverso visibilem et invisibilem esse dicimus." — Gerhard. loc. 23. s. 70. "Hence it cometh that we say there is a visible and invisible Church, not meaning to make two distinct churches, as our adversaries falsely and maliciously charge us, though the form of words may seem to insinuate some such thing, but to distinguish the divers considerations of the same church, which, though it be visible in respect of the profession of supernatural verities revealed in Christ, use of holy sacraments, order of ministry, and due obedience yielded thereunto, and they discernible that do communicate therein: yet in respect of those most precious effects and happy benefits of saving grace wherein only the elect do communicate it is invisible; and they that in so happy, gracious, and desirable things, have communion among themselves, are not discernible from others to whom this fellowship is denied, but are known only to God. That Nathanael was an Israelite, all men knew; that he was a true Israelite in whom was no guile, Christ only knew." — Field on the Church, b. i. c. 10.

visible and the invisible Church. It is easy to see that if, as Protestants hold, the true being of the Church lies not in that which gives it visible existence, but in the unseen work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians, the visible Church — that is, the Church as it meets the eye — can never be more than an inadequate representation of the body of Christ, or the Church in its truth; that these two aspects of the Church never perfectly correspond with each other.

In the first place, as has been more than once observed, the Church visible is, and ever must be, a mixed body, comprehending within its pale both those who are and those who are not savingly united to Christ. For ecclesiastical discipline, the appointed instrument of reducing the Church to a conformity with its idea, is not applicable to sins of the heart: with overt offences, which bring scandal upon the Christian name, its province terminates. By no exercise of discipline, therefore, however stringent, can hypocrites, or secret unbelievers, be removed from outward fellowship with the faithful members of Christ's body: yet how many are there in every local society of Christians who, though outwardly blameless, are destitute of living faith in Christ, and of his sanctifying grace. This is no doubtful conclusion gathered merely from what meets the eye, and therefore liable to the charge of precipitancy of judgment, or uncharitableness. In the parables of the tares and the net, it was foretold by Christ Himself that such, to the end of time, should be the condition of every visible Church.* This is the real application of the parables just mentioned, as well as of the passage in the second epistle to Timothy,

* These parables formed a frequent subject of dispute between the Catholics and the Donatists. Augustin urges them, with great effect, against the doctrine of his Donatist adversaries; at the same time that, as regards the true idea of the Church, he uniformly expresses himself in genuine Protestant language; e. g. "Cum igitur boni et mali dent et accipiant baptismi sacramentum, *nec regenerati spiritualiter in corpus et membra Christi coædificentur nisi boni*; profecto in bonis est illa ecclesia cui dicitur, 'Sicut lilium in medio spinarum, ita proxima mea in medio filiarum. In his est enim qui ædificant super petram, id est, qui audiunt verba Christi et faciunt; quia et Petro, confitenti se Christum Filium Dei, sic ait, 'Et super hanc petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam.' Non est ergo in eis qui ædificant super arenam, id est, qui audiunt verba Christi et non faciunt." — De Unit. Eccles. s. 60. See also Cont. Epist. Par. l. iii. s. 10. De Bap. Cont. Don. l. 4. s. 4. Cont. Cres. l. 2. s. 26. His words in the last passage are: Propter malam pollutamque conscientiam damnati a Christo jam in corpore Christi non sunt quod est ecclesia: *quoniam non potest Christus habere membra damnata.*" Even Cyprian, though his views upon this point are not so scriptural as those of Augustin, while he affirms that the tares are *in* the Church, guards himself against saying that they are *of* it: "Etsi videntur in ecclesiâ esse zizania, non tamen impediri debet aut fides aut caritas nostra, ut quoniam zizania esse in ecclesia cernimus, ipsi de ecclesia recedamus. Nobis tantummodo laborandum est ut frumentum esse possimus. — Epist. 51. ad Confessores, &c.

in which the Church is compared to "a great house" in which "are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour:" they refer, not as the Romish catechism teaches, to the mystical body in its truth and reality, but to the same body as imperfectly manifested under the form of an aggregate of particular churches. This, then, is one reason why the visible Church can never be a perfect representation of the true Church. As long as outward union with a local church is no certain proof of invisible union with Christ, we cannot, if the latter constitute the true being of the Church, affirm that the mystical body of Christ and the visible churches of Christendom are equivalent and co-extensive terms.

But even if it were possible to separate the chaff from the wheat, there would still remain an impediment to our holding the Church visible to be a perfect counterpart of the Church in its truth — viz. that we never do more than approximate to the real position which each member of Christ occupies in His body. Many are first in a visible church, who are last in the true Church; and many are first in the latter, who are last in the former. As we cannot, from the fact of a person's being a member of the Church of Ephesus, or of Corinth, at once conclude that he is a member of Christ's mystical body, so neither can we, even supposing him to be in living union with Christ, be certain that the position he occupies in those visible churches is that which he ought to occupy, — that which is his place in the sight of God, or in the true Church. It is not always the most eminent Christians that occupy the chief place in a local Christian society: the spiritual aristocracy, so to speak, of the Church is not always recognised, or elevated to its natural position. Christ, indeed, has made provision for the perpetual calling forth of those who are qualified by nature or by grace to lead and to edify their brethren. He gave, and still gives, evangelists, pastors, teachers, ministers of all kinds for the work of edifying His body — that is, He bestows the gifts requisite for the due discharge of these various ministries; but, instead of Himself directly pointing out those whom He endows with spiritual gifts and graces, He has committed to the Christian society the task of proving and authenticating their existence, and setting apart to their respective offices those in whom they may be found. But in the discharge of this duty, the Church, or those who act in its name, may make mistakes; the gift of spiritual discernment (*διάκρισις*, 1 Cor. xii. 10.) is liable, in passing to its exercise through an earthly channel, to contract imperfections which mar

its perspicacity; and thus it will often happen that Christians of inferior spiritual endowments shall be called to occupy a place above others, in this respect their superiors; and a visible Church will never exactly be, as regards the distribution of its orders and offices, as it would be were Christ Himself to dispose them. For example, if, as some think, our Lord, by his thrice repeated question to Peter, intended to convey the lesson that love to Himself is the great qualification for the pastoral office, it will be acknowledged that that office is frequently borne by those who are less qualified for it than the private Christians over whom they are placed in the Lord. So, again, spiritual wisdom and illumination are the result of eminent sanctity; but the official organ of the Spirit may be in sanctity far inferior to many of those to whom he ministers. Wherever these cases occur, and occur they must in the present condition of the Church, there is a want of exact correspondence between the Church in its truth, and the Church as it meets the eye. There is a hidden life of the body of Christ, which, after all is done that can be done to express it outwardly, fails of giving forth an adequate manifestation of itself.

To sum up briefly: — according to the teaching of the reformers, the mystical body of Christ is neither distinct from, nor yet exactly coincident with, the sum total of the visible churches of Christ. If, for the reason just given, we cannot hold the two to be convertible terms, we by no means, on the other hand, maintain that they constitute two distinct Churches;* for the members of the mystical body are always members of some local church, within the visible inclosure of which they and the tares grow up until the harvest. The true members of Christ cannot, in this life, form a distinct society by themselves; they exist in connexion with local societies of professing Christians in different parts of the world, and form an actual part, which is greater or less according to circumstances, of those churches. For while our Lord's parables forbid us to expect that there ever will be an exact coincidence between — for example — the local church of Corinth and the Church of God at Corinth, there may yet be a continual approximation thereto; and such an approximation does actually take place to a considerable extent when, through "tribulation or per-

* Nequaquam statuimus duas ecclesias, unam veram et internam, alteram nominalem et externam, sed dicimus ecclesiam unam eandemque, totum scilicet cœtum vocatorum, dupliciter considerari, ἔσωθεν scilicet et ἔξωθεν; sive respectu vocationis et externæ societatis, in fidei professione et usu sacramentorum consistentis, ac respectu interioris regenerationis et internæ societatis in vinculo Spiritus consistentis. — Gerhard. loc. 23. c. 6.

secution" for the name of Christ, those who have no real faith — no inward union with the Saviour — drop off and leave the Church in a state of comparative purity. That, however, which remains after this purifying process, and not that which has been separated by it, is, according to Protestantism, the Church; or, in other words, tribulation for Christ's sake does not imperfectly effect that now which Christ Himself will perfectly accomplish when, at His future appearing, He shall make an exact and final separation between the evil and the good. Far from propounding the doctrine of an imaginary, or, as Eck, the antagonist of Luther, termed it, a "mathematical," Church, we maintain, as strongly as the Romanist does, that, as every true Christian will give visible proofs of the existence of the unseen grace which is in him, so the "congregation of saints" will never be without its visible manifestation: it will give proof of its existence by means of the three great elements of Church life, — the Word, the Sacraments, and the exercise of discipline. Only we say that, as in the case of the individual Christian, his outward Christianity is never an adequate counterpart of his inward; his attainments fall short of his aims; his practice is below the standard which he proposes to himself, so that it is only imperfectly that the life within expresses itself outwardly; so, as regards the Church, that which is its *differentia* — which constitutes its essence — viz. the unseen presence of the Spirit — is but inadequately represented in the Church visible; the latter, as compared with the communion of saints, always being affected by an admixture of foreign and heterogeneous elements.

The objections which it is not uncommon to hear urged against the Protestant view were long ago shown by Melancthon to rest upon no solid foundation. When the Confession of Augsburgh was presented by the Protestants to Charles V., the emperor gave directions that it should be submitted to a select body of Romish theologians, with the view of ascertaining what possibility there might be of the parties coming to a mutual understanding. The papal divines, in a document which bears the title of *Confutatio Pontificia*, enumerated the principal points of difference between themselves and their opponents. Upon the seventh article of the confession submitted to them, they observed, "that if, by defining the Church to be 'a congregation of saints,' it was intended to exclude the wicked from it, the article could not, without prejudice to the faith, be admitted. That this was a revival of the doctrine of John Huss, which had been condemned by the Council of Con-

stance, and was incompatible with the statements of Scripture which compares the Church to a net, &c."* "It appears to be impossible," replies Melancthon in his Apology for the Confession "to escape misrepresentation. We purposely added the eighth article to show that we do not separate the wicked and hypocrites from outward communion with the Church, or deprive the Sacraments of their efficacy, when administered by evil men. We grant that the wicked and hypocrites are, in this life, members of the Church so far as regards external communion in those things which constitute the notes of the Church, — viz. the Word and the Sacraments. But the Church, though it manifests its existence by outward notes, the Word, &c., is not a community the true being of which lies in things external: it is, primarily, a community of believers; of those in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells.† That Church alone is called the body of Christ which Christ renews by His Spirit: they are not the members of Christ in whom Christ is not operative. In the Creed we declare our belief in the *Holy* Catholic Church; but the wicked do not constitute a Holy Church. But what need of many words? If the Church, which is the kingdom of Christ, is to be distinguished from the kingdom of Satan, it cannot be that evil men, belonging as they do to the kingdom of Satan, are of the Church; although, at present, they are found externally in the Church. *It does not follow that, because the manifestation of the true Church has not yet taken place, the wicked are members of it:* whether it be hidden, as now, or revealed, as will be the case hereafter, they only are members of Christ's kingdom whom He quickens by His Spirit. As to the parables of the tares, &c., they make more for our doctrine than for that of our adversaries, for they teach us that, at length, the true people of God will be separated from carnal professors. In those parables, Christ speaks of the Church as *it appears*" — *i. e.* becomes visible — "in this world,‡ in order that our faith might not be shaken, when we see it well-nigh hidden under the multitude of the ungodly. We must persist, then, in maintaining that the Church is, according to its idea (proprie, principaliter, dictam) a congregation of saints; and in so doing we only follow in the steps of Lyra, who long ago said, "The Church con-

* Conf. Pont. ad. Art. 7.

† "Ecclesia non est tantum societas externarum rerum ac rituum sicut aliæ politiæ, sed principaliter est societas fidei et Spiritus Sancti in cordibus, quæ tamen habet externas notas," &c.

‡ "Christum de *specie* ecclesiæ dicit, quum ait 'Simile est regnum cœlorum lagenæ," &c. The German version expresses the idea more distinctly: "Unterricht wie die Kirche *scheinet* in dieser Welt," teaches us how the Church becomes visible in this world.

sists of those who truly know and profess the truth.'* Whence that definition of the Church emanates which makes it to be an external kingdom, with the Roman Pontiff at its head, arrogating to itself the exercise of supreme dominion, both spiritual and temporal, we learn from the 11th chapter of Daniel." †

* Nicolas Lyra (ob. 1340.) was one of the precursors of the Reformation. The passage alluded to is as follows: — "Ecclesia non consistit in hominibus ratione potestatis vel dignitatis ecclesiasticæ vel secularis, quia multi Principes et summi Pontifices et alli inferiores inventi sunt apostatasse a fide. Propter quod ecclesia consistit in illis personis, in quibus est notitia vera et confessio fidei et veritatis."

† Apol. Conf. c. 4.

CONCLUSION.

GENERAL SUMMING UP OF THE ARGUMENT.

In gathering into one view the results of the preceding inquiry, it will not be necessary to repeat the remarks which have been already made on the progressive tendency of the earlier revelation, from an external system of coercive discipline, and of symbolical ordinances, to religion in its inward — that is, its immutable — aspect. Taking up the subject at the point where it was left, we proceed to observe that the anticipations which we should be led, from a survey of the course of preceding revelation, to form respecting the nature of the Christian dispensation, have been found realized. In Christianity the visible theocracy which prescribed to the outward act is seen giving place to an inner theocracy — that of the Spirit, — the external instrument of direction being the Word of God. Had it been otherwise, the Gospel, instead of being the consummation of all preceding dispensations, would have been a retrograde movement towards the shadows of Judaism. In short, the new Covenant of Christ is seen to be a continuation, not of that of Moses, but of the original covenant entered into with Abraham, which was founded upon a promise upon God's, and faith upon man's, part, and which the Law was never intended to disannul. As for the Law, entering or coming in parenthetically,* as it did, for a special purpose, it was, as soon as it had fulfilled its end, abolished; and the two covenants, between which it had been temporarily interposed, came together again, or, rather, the covenant of Abraham received in the Gospel its full accomplishment.

The purposes of revealed religion required that Christianity should be embodied in a visible Church, or aggregate of such churches, and possess positive institutions: and provisions were made to that end, either directly or indirectly, by Christ Himself. But the visible institutions of Christianity, whether rites or polity, are founded on a principle wholly different from that which pervaded the Mosaic appointments. They are not only fewer in num-

* Παρεισῆλθεν. Rom. v. 20.

ber, but their import and their mode of operation are different. Instead of working from without inwards,—that is, impressing, by means of discipline and habituation, an inward character,—they pre-suppose that living union with Christ which constitutes the essence of saving religion. When Christianity came into the world, the Law, which operated by means of external discipline, was presumed to have done its work; and Christianity, instead of being a new law, took up the disciple of Moses at the point of spiritual progress at which the Law had left him, and carried him on to the freedom of the Gospel—the liberty of that real sonship which comes to man through union with the only begotten Son of God. The same process is repeated in the case of each individual Christian. The moral law does its work first on the heart, but only to lead to an immediate apprehension of Christ in His various offices by faith. Hence the sacraments are efficacious, not *ex opere operato*, but because of the faith of the receiver; which faith they seal and strengthen indeed, but do not in the first instance communicate; for ordinarily it comes by the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit. As regards the organization of Christian societies, the pattern after which it was to proceed was not delivered directly by Christ: it was in existence long before the Saviour appeared upon earth. And the work itself proceeded slowly, and by degrees, as need required. The Church had no existence, as an institution, antecedently to that of believers in Christ:* it was first visible in those believers, when, on the day of Pentecost, they received the new spiritual influence which flows from the glorified Saviour. All that followed in the way of external organization was the result, and the visible evidence, of the life within; just as in the individual Christian the visible fruits of the Spirit proceed from the sanctified affections imparted to him from above. Further additions to the simple polity of the first congregation of believers were deferred until the want of them was felt. This comparative liberty of action, as regards external matters, is precisely what we should expect if Christianity be, as compared with Judaism, the manhood of the spiritual life; if it be a religion of spirit and truth; if in it that real fellowship of man with God, which preceding dispensations did but pre-figure, is vouchsafed to all believers.

Such are the facts which an examination of the inspired record has brought out to view; and the conclusion to which they lead seems obvious. When we come to define what the Church of

* For some good observations on this point, see Moehler's work, Einheit in der Kirche, sect. 49.

Christ is, in its essential being, we must adopt the Protestant definition,—viz. that it is, primarily and before it is anything else, a community of saints. For the definition of a thing must express its *differentia*, or specific difference; and its *differentia* must be drawn from that in it which is eternal and unchangeable; that which is the real basis of its visible existence; that which makes it what it is antecedently to the exhibition of its visible organic form. But this, in the case of the Christian Church, we have found to be the unseen presence of the spirit of Christ. This is what gives to the Church its existence in the sight of God,—that is, its real, as distinguished from its apparent, existence. The spiritual presence of the Saviour was, in fact, vouchsafed antecedently to the use of any of the visible ordinances, or appointments, by which its existence was to be permanently manifested; for the celebration of the Sacraments, and the regulations of polity, followed, not preceded, the invisible power from above which transformed a company of Jewish believers into a Church of Christ. The order of things thus at the first divinely established is an intimation of that which was to be observed throughout the whole course of the dispensation. For thus we learn that it is neither sacraments nor an Apostolical ministry that give being to the Church: they did not give it being when it first came into existence, and what they did not confer then they cannot confer now. What they gave to the Church, then, was not its true, but its visible, being,—its being in the sight of men: and this is precisely the relation in which they now stand to it. Not that the Sacraments are not positive appointments, and of perpetual obligation; not that the Church is not essentially visible:—all that is affirmed is that its true essence does not lie in the appointments by which it becomes visible, but in that which those appointments presuppose,—viz. the inhabitation of Christ by His Spirit in the hearts of believers. When Christ, according to His promise, came into the midst of the primitive One Hundred and Twenty, the new temple of God was really established upon earth, though as yet it had not put on a visibly organized form.

In perfect conformity with this view of the Church we have found the Apostles addressing Christian Churches as societies, not of mere professors of the Christian faith, but of saints and believers; and on that ground urging upon them the duties of a Christian life. Each Church is regarded, not as an institution, but as a living body, animated throughout by the Spirit of God: from which internal spring of action all its acts, as a Church, are sup-

posed to emanate. No visible Church is exactly what it professes to be; but any difficulty hence arising is obviated by the protestant and scriptural distinction between the body of Christ as it is in itself and as it becomes visible, or, in popular language, between the invisible and the visible Church. In its present imperfect manifestation, as an aggregate of visible churches, the mystical body of Christ appears in external conjunction with elements which do not properly belong to it, and which yet it cannot separate from itself: these, therefore, to use the language of Augustin, it tolerates until the day of Christ, without, however, lowering its own proper idea, so as to make it comprehend both the tares and the wheat. Hence the great importance of that distinction, without the aid of which it is difficult either to reconcile Scripture with itself or the actual facts of the Church with Scripture. Romanism meets the difficulty by lowering the idea so as to correspond with the fact, thereby depriving the Church of all its real value in the eye of the Christian, and reducing it, as Melancthon observes, to the level of a mere secular polity.

If the progressive tendency of revelation from the first, and the actual facts connected with the establishment of Christianity, are incompatible with the Romish conception of the Church, not less irreconcileable is that conception with Christian feeling and the conclusions of reason. Nothing can be more offensive to Christian instinct, if we may be allowed the expression, than the notion that Christ's mystical body — the *holy* Catholic Church — comprehends, according to its *idea*, both the good and the bad, — that is, that it is, in its true essence, a body morally indifferent. Let the theory be pushed to its extreme limit; let it be supposed that sanctifying faith were altogether to perish from Christendom, leaving, however, the polity of the Church and the visible signs of the Sacraments in existence; — we should still have to believe that the members of such Christian societies, if they may be so called, are true members of Christ's body, and consequently of Christ Himself; and, because they are in Christ, are in a state of salvation, or in the way of being saved! The enormity of such a view is manifest: yet it is only the legitimate consequence of the Romish theory. But this theory offends against reason also. For it severs the Church militant from the Church triumphant, and makes the body of Christ, which Scripture affirms to be one, to consist of two incongruous parts. It has been already observed that the two parts of which the body of Christ is composed — the Church militant and the Church triumphant — are in real, though

not visible, conjunction, and together make up the one body of which Christ is the head.* Now it is difficult to conceive how one body under one head, the members of which, by the supposition, have a vital organic connexion with the head, can be composed of two heterogeneous parts, or resemble the ill-compacted image of Daniel, the head of which was of fine gold, and the feet part of iron and part of clay. But, according to the Romish doctrine, this is actually the case. That part of Christ's body which consists of departed saints is, confessedly, a community, not of mixed composition, as every visible Church on earth is, but of saints, in the strict and highest sense of the word. We have ground to believe that with their mortal bodies the saints deposit whatever of sin and imperfection adhered to them in this life; and that the work of grace, which was here incomplete, is perfected after death. Thus while the severance of the whole body from the wicked, who were here in external conjunction with it, is deferred until the end of all things, a partial separation is even now effected by the transfer of each sanctified soul, as it departs from the body, into a place, or state, where there is no admixture of evil. This part of the body of Christ, therefore, is, in its composition, essentially holy; the holiness of its members being not a separable accident, but an essential property; not merely a corporate, but a personal, one. But, according to the teaching of Rome, the other part—the Church militant upon earth—is of a different character, being, according to the idea, a community of mixed composition, comprehending within its pale both good and bad: it is holy only in its corporate capacity, as being consecrated to the service of God, which is by no means incompatible with the supposition of its members being personally unsanctified. Thus we have two parts, heterogeneous in nature, coalescing into one homogeneous whole: the part in paradise excluding from its idea any admixture of evil; the part upon earth embracing within itself both the renewed and the unrenewed in heart. How an amalgamation of this kind can take place it is difficult to conceive. We may place things the formal characteristic of which is diverse side by side, or in simple juxtaposition; but we cannot, either in fact or mentally, combine them into one homogeneous body.

The same difficulty may be thus stated:—If the wicked are

* The body, that is, so far as it is completed: for, in strictness of language, the Church of Christ comprehends, not only the departed saints and those now upon earth, but also those who shall believe upon Him to the end of time. At present the Church is imperfect, because the number of God's elect is not accomplished. — See Burial Service, First Collect.

members of Christ by virtue of their being members of a visible Church of Christ, and continue so, unless excommunicated, to the last moment of life, why should they not, in a future state, still be members of Christ? Death, it will perhaps be replied, separates them from that Church of Christ which is His body. But why should death do so? Death effects no essential change in men's spiritual condition: as the tree falls so does it lie. If, then, they who are destitute of the Spirit of Christ may yet be members of Christ and of Christ's body here, why should they not continue to be so hereafter?* In a word, if the Church of God upon earth is, in its true idea, a body of mixed composition, there is no reason why the Church in paradise should not be the same: a conclusion which, however inevitable on Romish principles, is too much opposed to Scripture to be openly maintained.

It is no alleviation of the difficulty to urge that even in those who constitute the body of Christ upon earth—that is, according to Protestant views, true Christians—there is a contest going on between the Spirit and the flesh, and, consequently, a mixture of

* The degree of indistinctness which most students of Pearson must have felt to pervade his article on the "Holy Catholic Church" proceeds entirely from his setting out with the position that the Church, in its idea, comprehends both good and bad, and is called "holy" only "as St. Matthew calls Jerusalem the holy city, when we know that there was in that city a general corruption in manners." (On the Creed, p. 578. Oxford. Edit. 1833.) Immediately afterwards he proceeds to remark that "of those promiscuously contained in the Church, such as are void of all saving grace while they live and communicate" (outwardly he must mean) "with the rest of the Church, and when they pass out of this life, die in their sins, and remain under the eternal wrath of God; as they were not in their persons holy while they lived, *so are they in no way of the Church after their death*, neither as members of it nor as contained in it." Assuming Pearson's original position to be correct, we ask, why are such persons not members of the Church after death as well as before? If, notwithstanding their personal unholiness, they were true members of the body of Christ while they lived, what is there in death which should all at once deprive them of this privilege? Pearson supplies no answer to this obvious question. What is evidently wanting to justify his statement is the Protestant doctrine, that those who "are not in their persons holy" do not, even in this life, properly belong to the Church; for if this be so, we can then understand how death deprives them, not of real church-membership, for that they never enjoyed, but of that mere external connexion which they here had with the body of Christ. At death they do not *cease* to be members of the Church; but their never having been so, is then *manifested;* death does not sever them from the Church, but proves that they were never really of it. Elsewhere, however, in the same article, Pearson fully adopts the Protestant view, and, in fact, answers himself: "If I have communion with a saint of God, as such, while he liveth here, I must still have communion with him when he is departed hence: because the foundation of that communion cannot be removed by death. The mystical union between Christ and His Church—the spiritual conjunction of the members to the head—is *the true foundation of that communion* which one member hath with another. But death, which is nothing but the separation of the soul from the body, maketh no separation in the mystical union—no breach of the spiritual conjunction—and consequently there must continue the same communion, because there remaineth the same foundation."—Pp. 600, 601.

good and evil, which is not the case with the Church of the departed:* so that, even on their own ground, Protestants cannot make the two coalesce into one communion. For to admit that the Christian is not perfect, is by no means to admit that he is under the dominion of sin; and the objection proceeds on the supposition that we have no alternative but to maintain the one proposition or the other. It is true that Christians never in this life attain a perfect freedom from sin: it is true that there is ever going on within them a conflict between good and evil; and that, at best, their holiness is imperfect. But the distinctive feature of the Christian is, that he struggles *successfully* against sin; that sin is no longer dominant in him: he is a real saint, though an imperfect one. His inward man is emancipated from the thraldom of evil, though the traces of his former state of slavery are yet visible. This is the light in which Scripture always represents the Christian. It seems not to recognise the sin that yet cleaves to him as properly part of himself, or, at any rate, as essentially interfering with the *present* enjoyment of his spiritual privileges. Imperfect as he is, he is actually risen with Christ: he has within him the earnest of the inheritance, the commencement and pledge of eternal life itself. The remnants of an evil nature which still cleave to him belong not to him as a Christian, any more than the decaying husk out of which the butterfly is evolving itself is part of the insect itself. The Christian life here is as essentially one with that of the glorified saints as the bud with the flower, the child with the man. The saint here is not a different being from the same saint in paradise, but one and the same person in different stages of spiritual growth. Hence there can be a real communion between that part of the body of Christ which is upon earth and that part which is in the place of separate spirits; the Spirit of Christ, the true foundation of their communion, reigning equally in both, though in the former His reign is not so undisturbed as it is in the latter. Augustin, as quoted by Bishop Taylor (Dissuasive, &c.), touches upon this flaw in the Romish theory, when he remarks:—non reverâ Domini corpus est, quod cum illo non erit in æternum," that is not truly the body of Christ which is not to reign with Christ eternally.

It is only the Protestant that assigns to the Church a place among the articles of the Christian faith. Faith is the evidence of things not seen, and, as such, is opposed to sight. Faith dis-

* Gladstone's Church Principles, &c. p. 115.

cerned — what to the eye of sight was invisible — in Jesus of Nazareth the Only begotten son of God. Were the Church primarily a visible institution or system, there would be no more need of faith now to realize its existence than there was need of it to assure the Jew of the existence of the Mosaic institutions. The authors of the Romish Catechism, unable in any other way to explain why the Church should form an article of the Creed, refer us to the "mysteries" or sacraments therein celebrated, the nature of which, we are told, is beyond human comprehension.* But this is faith in the sacraments, not faith in the Church. Nor is Bellarmin more successful in extricating himself from the difficulty, when he urges that, whereas the Church is a society of those who profess the doctrines of Christianity, and what the Christian doctrines are is matter not of sight, but of faith, this is sufficient to account for the Creed's containing the article in question;† for this, again, is only faith in the Christian faith. It is the Church itself that is presented as an object of faith; and why it is so, is, on Protestant grounds, easily understood. The visible Church, in its ordinary state, so little answers to its true idea, that the Christian, looking upon the outward appearance only, might well be tempted to doubt whether the gates of hell had not, contrary to Christ's promise, prevailed against Christ's mystical body. What is the history of the Church but a history of the heresies, divisions, and scandals, which have ever deformed the face of visible Christianity? To the Christian the aspect of visible Christianity is perplexing in the extreme; and were it not for the sure word of promise, his hasty conclusion would resemble that of Elijah under analogous circumstances. But here faith, in its proper office, interposes, and realizes to the believer what we cannot see. The promise of Christ assures him that, although this or that visible Church may become corrupt, and finally perish, the true Church never can fail: the same promise enables him to believe that, notwithstanding the sins, divisions, imperfections, and changes incident to the Church visible, the Church, in its eternal and unchangeable attributes of unity, truth, and holiness, is not the less in being, and not the less secure against the assaults of every enemy.

Comparing the two theories in a philosophical point of view, we must assign the superiority to the Protestant. A religious society the distinctive being of which consists in its ritual, or polity, is

* "Etsi quivis ratione et sensibus percipit ecclesiam . . . . tamen illa mysteria quæ in sancta ecclesia contineri declaratum est, mens fide tantummodo illustrata intelligere potest." — Cap. x. s. 21.

† De Eccles. Mil. l. iii. 15.

obviously in a lower stage of progress than one which has its true characteristic in the inner spirit that pervades it; for no one surely will deny that religion has not attained its proper end until it has become a disposition of the heart. If there be two religious communities, of one of which it is the characteristic to work from without inwards, as a mould impresses its likeness upon the passive clay; while in the other the mode of working is from within outwards, the visible institutions being, as in all forms of organic life, the result and the manifestation of the spirit within; there can be no doubt that the latter alone fully answers to the idea of a religious society. The former may have its use and its value, but it can only be as introductory to the latter, which is exactly the relation in which Judaism stands to Christianity. The Law, imperfect as it was in itself, had its use in preparing the way for the Gospel; but it is an abuse of it — a misconception of its place in God's dispensation — to reproduce it under the present dispensation. Moreover, if the question were proposed, how can we best secure the visible extension of the Church, and a vigorous development of church life in polity, discipline, the use of the Sacraments, and spiritual exercises, common sense, as well as Scripture, would dictate the reply: first form and strengthen the spiritual life within, which, if it exist in a healthy state, will inevitably throw itself out into a corresponding energy of action: whereas, to begin from without — to aim in strengthening the life within by multiplying outward observances, in which the act done is more regarded than the spirit in which it is done — can end in nothing but disappointment: it may produce a semblance of religious activity, but this activity will be mechanical, — not the spontaneous energy of a living being. Bodily vigour is better promoted by strengthening the central functions than by carefully cherishing the extremities of the system. A religious system which has its true being within possesses a substantial ground of permanent visibility; for life and feeling struggle for outward expression, and rest not until they have attained their suitable manifestation: but a religion, the essence of which lies in its visible institutions, tends, by an inevitable process, to its own dissolution: unsustained by a living energy within, the husk decays, and at length drops off. Just in proportion, then, as Protestantism, as compared with Romanism, takes the inward view of the Church, does it place the legitimate expansion of the various elements of visible church life upon a surer and more permanent basis.*

* In reference to this point, Moehler has a remarkable passage: "It is not to be doubted that Christ maintains His Church in vigour by means of those who live in faith, belong to

It is not indeed to be denied that Protestantism, inasmuch as it does not profess to be absolute truth, but truth as opposed to Romanism, may, like all systems which have arisen from reaction, and have been framed in opposition to strongly felt evils, give birth to tendencies which, when carried out, are destructive of the conditions under which Christianity was intended by its divine Founder to exist in the world. The temptation either to undervalue the external means of grace or to regard the inward fellowship of the Spirit, not only as, what it is, the real basis of the visible unity of Christians, but as, of itself, compensating for the absence of such unity where unhappily it does not exist, is that to which the Protestant is exposed, and against which he must be on his guard. He may be tempted to forget that the sacraments, if they do not work *ex opere operato*, are yet special and effectual seals of our union with Christ; yea, are ordinarily necessary to salvation; and that apostolic, or even ecclesiastical, regulations of polity, if they cannot be proved to be of the essence of the Church, are not on that account to be regarded as of no importance. He may not sufficiently bear in mind that the spiritual life in the hearts of Christians must necessarily be in a feeble condition if it does not succeed in producing visible results in the way of unity and organization; and that the Church can only operate upon the world by means of its visible ordinances, and its visible corporate life. It must be admitted, in short, that there is an affinity between Protestantism and mysticism, or gnosticism, which renders it possible for the former to degenerate into the latter. But it should be remembered that the Romish theory also has its evil tendencies, and those of a more pernicious character than belongs to the extreme of ultra-Protestantism. Fanaticism, superstition, and the practices of the ascetic discipline, are the perversions of religious life which the Romish doctrine of the Church has a tendency to produce, and in fact has produced: perversions which are less susceptible of correction than those connected with spiritualistic tendencies. It should seem, too, that that theory must, when its natural results are not neutralised by other influences, operate injuriously upon the standard of Christian practice: to say the least, its tendency is to keep out of sight the important truth

Him in spirit, and hope for his appearing: these, unquestionably, are the true supporters of the visible Church. As for the wicked in the Church — that is, the unbelieving and the hypocrites, — the dead members of Christ's body, — they would not for a single day maintain the Church, even in its visibility; as far as in them lies, they divide it and expose it to contempt." — Symbolik, p. 431. The wonder is how, from such an admission, he was not led to question the soundness of the Romish theory.

that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost."* In short, the difference between the Protestant and the Romanist being, that the former sets out from a true conception, which may be perverted, the latter from a false conception which may be corrected; it is obvious that, both being supposed liable to an erroneous extreme, the evil in the former case is likely to be less hurtful, and more easily rectified, than it is in the latter.

It need hardly be observed, in conclusion, that every view of the Church, whether it call itself Romish or not, which coincides with Romanism in making the inward fellowship of the Christian with Christ a thing separable from the idea, or definition, of the Church; every view which, while it admits that such fellowship is the object for which men are brought into the Church, is an end to be aimed at by Christians, denies that it is of the essence of Church membership; is, so far, erroneous. It matters little, in this point of view, whether we take our stand on fully developed papal Romanism or stop short at the episcopal theory of Cyprian: a difference of opinion as regards the supremacy of the pope does not affect the real identity of the theory, which in either case is, that the Church is primarily a visible institution established for the purpose of making men Christians; according to the Romanist a papal, according to the Cyprianist an episcopal, institution. This indeed is evident; but it is a singular circumstance that theological views, generally supposed to be the very opposite of Romanism, are sometimes found conducting to the same conclusion on the subject of the true idea of the Church. Rationalistic tendencies, especially in relation to the doctrine of spiritual influence, lead commonly to an external conception of the Church, or to the position that the Church is, according to its idea, a society of persons *professing* the Christian faith, and visibly participating in the sacraments; which differs not essentially from the Romish doctrine upon the subject. In this, as in other instances, extremes are found to meet. But whatever be the parentage of this conception of the Church, — whether Romanism or rationalism, — it is to be rejected, as opposed to the teaching of the Reformers, and, which is still more important, as contrary to that of Scripture.

* "Si ecclesiam tantum definiemus externam politiam esse bonorum et malorum, non intelligent homines regnum Christi esse justitiam cordis et donationem Spiritus Sancti, sed judicabunt tantum externam observationem esse certorum cultuum ac rituum." — Melanc. Apol. Conf. Art. 7. s. 12.

BOOK II.

THE NOTES AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE CHURCH.

In most of the principal works which the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced on the Romish controversy the reader meets with a long discussion upon what are called the notes of the Church, — or the visible tokens by which it may be known, and distinguished from other religious communities. Such a topic of controversy implies division; for it supposes that there exist rival communities, each claiming to be a portion of the visible church, or one arrogating to itself that title, to the exclusion of the rest; and it is proposed, by the discussion, to furnish the inquirer with certain discriminating signs, by the application of which to the several communities calling themselves Christian he may ascertain which of them have a right to that title, and which not. The true idea of the Church having been, in the foregoing pages, the subject of investigation, it is now proposed to make such observations upon the notes and attributes of that which we have found to be, in its idea, a community of saints, as shall be consistent with the limits and scope of the present work; the special object of which, it will be remembered, is to illustrate the fundamental differences on the subject between Romanists and Protestants.

PART I.

THE NOTES OF A CHURCH.

With respect to the notes of a church, we are met at the threshold of the inquiry by a difference of opinion, as to what are to be considered proper notes; a difference which naturally flows from the conception which each party entertains of the true being of the Church itself. The Romish formularies adopt as notes of the Church the properties assigned to it in the Constantinopolitan creed, — viz. Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity, and Apostolicity:* the Protestant insist upon the pure preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of the Sacraments.† This difference in the selection of notes is a consequence of that which exists between the parties as to the nature of the one holy Church, as will appear from the following observations.

The Protestant is precluded from adopting the four attributes enumerated in the Nicene creed, as notes of the Church, by his fundamental position, that the Holy Catholic Church, of which the Creed makes mention, is at present an object of faith, and not of sight, or is not yet manifested in its proper corporate unity, but only under the form of particular churches. For a "note" is, by the very force of the term, something which meets the eye, some property or characteristic by which the subject in which it inheres becomes capable of recognition. Now since, according to the Pro-

* Cat. Conc. Trid. pp. 80, 81.

† The Anglican Confession, Art. 19. Conf. Aug. Art. 7. The Romish Theologians do not confine themselves to the four notes above mentioned. Thus Bellarmin (De Not. Eccles.) assigns fifteen notes: others of his communion fewer. Similar variations occur in Protestant writers, — *e. g.* Luther assigns seven notes, Field six, &c. But the true authentic Protestant notes are the pure preaching of the Word and the right administration of the Sacraments; as on the Romish side are the attributes enumerated in the Constantinopolitan creed. Bellarmin himself says of his fifteen notes: "quindecim notas proponemus quæ, si quis velit, poterunt aliquo modo revocari ad illas quatuor quæ communiter a recentioribus assignantur ex symbolo Constantinopolitano, Unam, Sanctam, Catholicam, et Apostolicam." — De Not. Eccl. c. 3.

testant view, the subject of the four properties in question, is, in its corporate capacity, invisible, these properties, in the sense in which they can be truly predicated of the subject, are themselves invisible; or, in other words, the true essential unity, holiness, &c. of the one true Church are things which do not meet the eye. True it is, as we shall see hereafter, that just as the body of Christ manifests itself under the form of visible churches, so to its essential attributes there belong corresponding visible manifestations; and thus there is a sense in which unity, sanctity, &c., may be predicated of the visible Catholic church, or aggregate of Christian societies in the world. But it is equally true that, as in the case of the mystical body itself, its visible manifestation is but an imperfect and inadequate one, so, in the case of its attributes, the outward manifestation never fully corresponds to the unseen reality, and what is realized always falls short of the idea. The *visible* unity or sanctity of the Church is always necessarily imperfect, and may be so very imperfect as not in any way to serve the purpose of a note. That the Church should strive to be visibly one, and visibly holy, is unquestionable; but it may happen that an unfortunate combination of circumstances shall so thwart her efforts, and render her visible aspect one of such disunion and unholiness, that faith alone can give us the assurance, as of the fact of the true church's existence, so of the fact of her being, notwithstanding visible appearances, essentially one, and, according to the measure of holiness attainable in this life, essentially holy. This is actually the present condition of visible Christendom. So numerous and inveterate are the divisions existing among those professing the Christian name, that an unbeliever, looking at things from without, would be likely to assign, not unity, but disunion, as a note of the Church; that is, as a visible token by which it may be known. The same may be said of the Church's visible sanctity, and to some extent even of the other two properties. These attributes, then, being at best incapable of a perfect visible manifestation, and frequently hardly manifested at all, the Protestant is compelled to adopt notes of a different nature, notes which are independent of the actual condition of the Christian body; and these can be no other than the pure preaching of the Word and the right administration of the Sacraments.

The Romanist, on the other hand, holding the mystical body of Christ to be a visible society under a visible head, and moreover His own Church, exclusive of every other, to be that society, is not affected by the difficulty just mentioned; and having an ob-

vious interest in not admitting the Word and the Sacraments to be sufficient notes of the Church, he adopts, as such, the predicates of the one true Church; making them, however, as has been before remarked, correspond in nature with the subject of which they are predicates, — that is, attaching to them a merely outward signification. Thus, according to the Romish catechism, the essential unity of the Church consists in its members acknowledging the one central jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff; its sanctity in its being the repository of the means of grace; its Catholicity in its having the title of Catholic; and its Apostolicity in its being governed by a ministry traceable by visible succession up to the Apostles. It is worthy of remark that every theory of the Church, whether it profess to be Romanist or not, which teaches that the true being thereof lies in its visible characteristics, adopts instinctively the Romish notes, and rejects the Protestant; * though it is only papal Romanism that can legitimately and consistently do so.

The Protestant notes, as is evident, are applicable, not to the mystical body of Christ, but to particular churches; or, more strictly, to the primary element of every such Church, a congregation (the "cœtus" of our article) under its pastors. What the Protestant affirms is simply this: — that wherever there is a professing Christian society, "in which the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same," that society has a rightful claim to the title of a true Church of Christ. † To advance further, and attempt to define by visible notes which *the* true Church is would be to abandon Protestant ground, and trespass upon that of the opponent. The Protestant does not profess to point out *who* are members of the true Church, since, according to his view, it does not follow that, because a person is in communion with a visible Church, he is therefore a member of Christ's body: his notes have no reference to individuals, — no reference to the Church in its concrete aspect; they merely aim at specifying, in the abstract, what is sufficient to make a society a true visible Church of Christ. The Protestant says, in general, The Church (or a part of it) is there where the Word and the Sacraments are; and the society in which the one is preached, and the other administered, is a legitimate part of the

* See, for example, Palmer's Treatise on the Church. Part I. c. 2.

† Some formularies (*e. g.* the Scotch Confession, Art. 18.) add, the exercise of discipline. And, indeed, this does seem to be nearly as essential as the notes specified in our article.

visible Catholic Church. The Romanist, on the contrary, aims at specifying the persons who belong to the true Church; and this he is enabled to do, because he defines the true Church by external characteristics, which appertain equally to the evil and to the good, — viz. profession of the Christian faith, outward participation of the sacraments, and communion with the Bishop of Rome. Bellarmin has remarked this distinction, and grounded upon it an argument against the sufficiency of the Protestant notes: — "These notes" (the Word and the Sacraments) "are insufficient for their purpose; for from them we cannot tell *who* are the elect and the justified; and learn rather *where* the Church lies hid than which it is:" * but, as he remarks in another place, it is essential to the Romish doctrine of the visibility of the mystical body of Christ that we should be able to point out who are the members of it. Why the Protestant can make no such attempt is sufficiently obvious.

The true significance, however, of the Protestant notes has yet to be explained. It is to be observed, then, that in one point of view they indicate the connecting link between the visible and the true Church, and in another, they are opposed to the exclusive theory of Rome and of the Church system. A visible Church, it has been already remarked, owes its title of a Church to its presumed identity with the body of Christ in that particular locality, and is, in fact, what it professes to be, in proportion as it becomes purified, by trial and persecution, from the foreign elements which are merely in external conjunction with it. Still these foreign elements are never wholly thrown off; and the question arises, what is it that makes a local church, notwithstanding its mixed condition, a true Church of Christ, in the sense in which trueness is predicable of a local Christian society? This question resolves itself into another, — viz. wherein does the point of connexion lie between the visible and the true Church; how is it that the two are inseparably connected together? Obviously, the sought-for point of union lies in the visible administration of those means of grace by which, as instruments, the Holy Spirit works, continually replenishing the true Church with members out of the

* "Si non scimus distincte qui sint, qui ecclesiam constituunt, non tam scimus quæ sit ecclesia quam ubi sit, seu potius ubi lateat ecclesia, *quod quidem non satis est ad ecclesiæ visibilitatem salvandam.*"—De Eccles. mil. c. 10. In the same chapter he well observes, that if Romanists were to admit that persons destitute of internal saving faith are not members of the body of Christ, there would no longer be any substantial difference between themselves and their opponents: — "Si ii qui fide internâ carent, non sunt, nec esse possunt, in ecclesiâ, nulla erit inter nos et hæreticos amplius quæstio de ecclesiæ visibilitate."

visible; and those means are, the preached Word and the Sacraments. To the visible Church, as such, it belongs to administer these ordinances, for whatever be the state of heart of those to whom the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments is committed, these means of grace are efficacious, not on account of the human channel through which they pass, but by virtue of Christ's promise and the faith of the recipient; and even though ministered by evil men "the effect of Christ's ordinance is not taken away."* To the visible Church, then, comprehending as it does both wheat and tares, the public administration of the means of grace belongs; and, as it is by the instrumentality of these means that the true Church is gathered in, it is obvious that it is no more possible to sever the one from the other than it is to sever the inward grace of the Sacraments from the visible sign; and that, in fact, as in the Sacraments the outward sign and the inward grace are not two sacraments, but the two aspects — the inward and the outward — of one and the same ordinance, so the visible and the true Church are not distinct communities, but one and the same, regarded from different points of view, ἔξωθεν and ἔσωθεν. The true Church depends for the maintenance of its existence upon the visible Church, and, in turn, the visible Church is supported by the true. For, as Moehler admits, if true faith were altogether to perish from any Christian society, that which gives it visible existence would speedily come to an end: the Sacraments, and the ministry of the Word, would be no longer frequented. Thus a reciprocal action is ever going on; the visible Church, as such, dispensing the means of grace by which Christ works to the gathering in of his elect, and the true Church, as such, upholding and perpetuating the visible use of those means by furnishing faithful recipients of them. In determining, therefore, the claim of any society to be a Church of Christ, the Protestant merely inquires whether the divinely appointed means of grace are there in active operation: if so, he pronounces the society to be a true church, because he believes, on the strength of Christ's promise, that those means are never inoperative, and that where the Word and the Sacraments are duly ministered there must, in that place, be a part of Christ's body, comprised within, or rather manifesting itself under the form of, the local Christian society. In this sense only it is that a visible Church can be called a true Church. So far forth as it is a visible Church, we can affirm nothing concerning the spiri-

* Art. xxvi.

tual state of its members: what we can ascertain is, whether or not the Word and the Sacraments are there ministered, and the fact of their being so is to us warrant sufficient to pronounce it a true Church of Christ; true, not in the sense in which the invisible Church is true, but because the true means of salvation are therein dispensed.

Hence the Protestant notes, though the proper subject of their application is local churches, serve also, mediately, as notes of the true Church: they serve, as Bellarmin accurately remarks, to point out *where* it is, though not *which* it is. "Extra vocatorum cœtum non sunt quærendi electi:" if there were no visible churches there would be no true Church. The ministry of the Word and the Sacraments are, on the one hand, the visible expression of the unseen faith which constitutes the life of the Church; and, on the other, they are the instruments of the Spirit, in regenerating and building up those who shall be saved: as notes, therefore, they serve to assure us of the existence of that mystical body which, in itself, is an object, not of sense, but of faith; by which the charge brought of old against the Protestant doctrine — that its invisible Church is a fiction of the imagination — is abundantly refuted.* No other notes can give us this assurance. Visible unity, sanctity, &c., are neither perpetual nor indispensable conditions of the existence of the body of Christ; and, moreover, they are not the instruments, but the fruits, of the Spirit, and, like all the fruits of the Spirit, they may be more or less realized, — may exist in different degrees of perfection; and who is to decide how much unity or sanctity is requisite to constitute a note of the Church? What is essential to the being of the true Church is, the means of grace, through which the members of it are called and sanctified: they alone, therefore, — the Word and the Sacraments — are permanent, infallible notes of its existence.†

Besides indicating the point of connexion between the visible church, as such, and the true Church, and serving as landmarks to teach us *where* the true Church is, the Protestant notes contain an implicit protest against the doctrine, whether Romish or Cyprianic, which makes any form of polity *essential* to the idea of a true visible church. For they implicitly affirm that every society in

* "Appellatio ecclesiæ invisibilis valde exosa est Pontificiis: Eccius hanc vocabuli acceptionem ridet, et dicit esse 'ecclesiam mathematicam,' et 'ideas Platonicas.' Alii vocant 'stigmaticam, utopicam, imaginariam ecclesiam.'" Gerhard, loc. xxiii. c. 7.

† "Quibus ecclesia constituitur, congregatur, alitur, et conservatur, illæ sunt propriæ, genuinæ et infallibiles notæ ecclesiæ. Sed verbo Dei, et usu Sacramentorum, ecclesia constituitur, alitur," &c. — Gerhard, loc. xxiii. c. 10.

which the Word and the Sacraments are purely ministered has for that reason — whatever other visible features it may present — a right to the title of a true church. Agreement in these two essential points gives the society a claim to be admitted to the fellowship of the churches of Christ. The reason why it does so is, on Protestant principles, obvious. Since the visible churches of Christ — otherwise distinct communities — are one, by reason of their common connexion with the body of Christ, which alone is truly one, every society, which we may presume to be a manifestation of Christ's body, must also be regarded as essentially connected with all the other churches of Christ: but wherever the pure Word and the Sacraments are ministered, there we have reason to believe there is a part of Christ's body. Every society, therefore, which exhibits these two notes, is a legitimate member of the visible church Catholic, and should be recognized by the other members as such; because, whatever other discrepancies it may exhibit, it contains that in it which makes it substantially one with the other members of the Christian commonwealth; or, to express the same thing otherwise, the fundamental requirements of visible unity among the churches of Christ are satisfied by the visible exercise in each of them of those means — viz. the Word and the Sacraments — which the Holy Ghost employs to call into being, and to edify, the members of the one true church of God. That this is one chief point which the Protestant notes are intended to express, may be inferred from the statements of the Augsburg Confession, which, after defining a church to be "a congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered," adds, "for the true unity of the Church" (*i. e.* visible churches) "it is sufficient that there be an agreement concerning the doctrine of the Gospel, and the administration of the Sacraments; nor is it necessary that traditions, rites, or ceremonies of human origin should be everywhere the same."*

The objections which are urged by Romanists against the Protestant notes — as that every sect, however heretical, lays claim to purity of doctrine; or that the true notes of the Church should be inseparable from it; whereas purity of doctrine is not so, as we learn from the cases of the Galatian and Corinthian churches, which were true churches of Christ, and yet were affected with serious doctrinal errors;† — are, for the most part, such as sug

* Conf. Aug. Art. 7. See also Thirty-nine Articles, Art. 29.

† Bellarmin. De Not. Eccles. c. 2.

gest their own answer. It does not follow that because heretical sects profess to teach the pure Word of God, they actually do so, much less that no one can tell what the true doctrine of the Gospel is: the existence of counterfeit coins does not prove that there is no genuine money in circulation, or deprive us of the power of discriminating between the two. Indeed, we may retort the argument upon the Romanist, and fairly urge that, inasmuch as heretical sects, however they may differ in other respects, are all found professing to teach the pure Word of God, this last must be a note of a true church, otherwise these sects would not be so anxious to establish their claim to the distinction; just as the circulation of counterfeit coins proves that the genuine coin of the realm possesses the value commonly ascribed to it. As to the argument drawn from the Corinthian and Galatian churches, it is to be observed that, as regards the preaching of the Word, and consequently the churches in which it is preached, there are various degrees of purity; and that not every error in doctrine disentitles the society which maintains it to be considered a true Church. In truth, "the pure Word of God" is an abstract ideal, by their approximation to which churches must be estimated. If the preaching of the Word altogether ceases, there no longer exists a visible Church at all; if error in fundamentals is taught, the society ceases to be a true Church; and if fundamental truth be preached but with an admixture of error, the Church is a true, though not a perfectly pure, one; the degree of its impurity depending upon the number and nature of the errors with which it is affected. As regards the particular instances adduced, it was not the church of Corinth as a Church, but certain members of it, that denied the doctrine of the resurrection ("How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" 1 Cor. xv. 12.); while the Galatians, though in imminent danger of being corrupted from the simplicity of the Gospel, still retained hold of the fundamental truths of Christianity, and were susceptible of apostolic correction. The further question may, indeed, be asked, What truths in Christianity are to be considered fundamental, and what not? but this point being supposed to be settled, that society which professes truth in fundamentals exhibits one of the notes of a true Church. Upon the subject of fundamentals some remarks will hereafter be offered.

But does not the Protestant, in making purity of doctrine a note of the Church, fall into the logical error of petitio principii? Does he not assume that to be known which it is the very purpose

of the inquiry to discover? "The true Church, indeed, possesses the genuine Word of the Gospel, and the sacraments, which constitute its life. Nevertheless, when it comes to a strife of different parties, the true Church of Christ cannot, by these notes, be distinguished. For this is the alternative placed before us;—we must either, from the fact that he who preaches is a true saint, conclude that his doctrine is pure, or, from the circumstance that his doctrine is pure, conclude that he is a living member of the Church. The first is impossible, for none but God knows who are truly sanctified by His Spirit; the second presupposes that he whom we conceive to be inquiring after the true doctrine of Christ is already acquainted with it; in which case the inquiry is superfluous. We inquire which is the true Church, because we would ascertain what is the true doctrine of Christ, and be sure that we possess it; but if we are told, by way of answer, that there the true Church is where true doctrine is preached, the answer manifestly is nothing but the question itself; that is, it is no real answer at all."* So reasons Moehler, and Bellarmin before him. The objection which these writers take against the Protestant notes amounts to this: in making the pure Word of God a note of the Church, Protestants forget that he who knows what the pure doctrine of Christ is must already know which the true Church is; for it is from the true Church that he must have received his knowledge of the true doctrine. There is a degree of plausibility in this argument which makes it the more necessary to point out the fallacy upon which it rests; but before we proceed to do so, it may be worth while to point out how that fundamental error of Romanism, which makes union with the Church not the consequence, but the cause, of union with Christ, is here operative. The inquirer is supposed to be seeking for the true Church, not because, being in possession of saving truth and faith, he seeks to join himself to the company of the faithful, but because it is through the Church (*i. e.* by visible union with it) that he expects to attain to Christ. He is supposed to be, at first, altogether outside the circle of Christian faith and feeling, and to proceed from this external point of view to examine which of the contending parties is the true Church. Of course, on this supposition, it would be absurd to tell him that that is a true Church where the pure Word and the Sacraments are ministered; for

* Symbolik. p. 420. "Notæ debent notiores ea re, cujus sunt notæ, alioquin enim non sunt notæ. Jam sine dubio notius est, quæ sit vera ecclesia, quam quæ sit vera prædicatio verbi; nam id ab ecclesia discimus."—Bellarm. de Not. Eccles. c. 2.

what the pure Word is, and what constitutes the rightful administration of the Sacraments, he, by the supposition, knows not. But how unlikely is the case ever to occur. What interest can an unbeliever, as such, or a person indifferent to religion, be supposed to have in discussing the question, Which is the true Church? If ever such a person is brought to a sense of religion, his first inquiry, we may be sure, will be, not Which is the true Church? but, "What must I do to be saved?"—a concern for his own personal salvation will take precedence of everything else. Not until he has himself tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, can he be supposed to feel the slightest interest in investigating the ecclesiastical pretensions of this or that society of professing Christians. The case of an unbeliever deliberately engaging, before his conversion, in such an inquiry as this, is one which probably never has occurred. The Protestant notes, on the contrary, are framed on the supposition that the inquirer is capable of discriminating between what is, and what is not, the pure doctrine of Christ: he is presumed to be a believer in Christ, to know the voice of the great Shepherd, and, knowing it, to inquire where the resting place of the flock is. If, as Scripture declares, personal union with Christ by faith precedes union with the visible Church, or any desire for such union, it is obvious that the inquirer after the true Church must be supposed to have the criteria of trueness in himself,—that is, to know what is the true Word of God. But does the Protestant, in maintaining this, argue in a vicious circle? Far from it; as we shall now endeavour to point out.

The fallacy of the Romish argument is connected with the ambiguity of the statement, that it is from the true Church that men derive their knowledge of true doctrine; which is true in one sense, and not in another. It is not true that the Church is the ultimate source of our knowledge of divine truth, or that we hold a doctrine to be a part of the Word of God, because the Church pronounces it to be so: the only authoritative source of divine truth is Holy Scripture. Yet it is true that, ordinarily, we become acquainted with the inspired volume itself, and with what Christians hold to be the subject matter of its revelation, through the intervention of the Church; for it is to the Church that the ministry of the Word, and the custody of the Scriptures, are committed. By taking care to make this distinction between what are, and what are not, the legitimate functions of the Church in handing down the deposit of divine truth, the whole difficulty connected

with the Protestant notes will be found to disappear. We receive the Christian Scriptures, the ultimate standard of divine truth, from the Christian Church only in the same sense in which the Christian Church itself received the Old Testament Scriptures from the Jews. The Jews were in their day witnesses and keepers of holy writ; witnesses to its divine origin, and keepers of it as a sacred deposit, to be preserved from addition, mutilation, and corruption: a trust which they discharged with singular fidelity, but which, as every one must perceive, by no means implied authority on their part to deliver either a new revelation or an inspired interpretation of the existing one. What the Old Testament taught was to be gathered from itself, not from the opinions of its human guardians. In the same relation precisely does the Church of Christ now stand to the completed volume of inspiration. She is its witness and keeper; but her office is ministerial, not authoritative; she witnesses to the fact of the Scriptures being the Word of God, but, far from having authority to deliver an infallible interpretation of it, she is herself bound to submit to its authoritative declarations. She calls upon men to believe upon that Saviour upon whom she herself believes; she instructs them in what she holds to be the Christian faith; and she presents them with that inspired volume which she receives as the Word of God: but further than this her office does not extend. Hence there is nothing contradictory in the supposition that the Church may be the instrument of our becoming acquainted with the Gospel, and supply the necessary materials — the external criteria — for our arriving at the conclusion that Scripture is the Word of God, and yet herself be bound to submit her pretensions to purity to the touchstone of Scripture. It is quite possible for a Church to be a faithful witness and keeper of holy writ, and yet to be convicted, the moment the volume is opened and perused, of the most serious corruptions in doctrine and practice: just as the Jews faithfully and scrupulously preserved their Scriptures, but preserved them to their own shame and condemnation. It is conceivable that the Church of Rome, for example, may, by the preaching of the fundamental truths of the Gospel which she still retains, be the instrument of converting a heathen community to the faith of Christ, and yet that her converts, supposing them to be permitted access to the inspired Word, shall, from the study of that Word, become convinced that the teaching of their spiritual mother is, in many points, widely different from the pure doctrine of Christ. There is, therefore, no real foundation for the charge that Protestants, in making the pure preaching of

the Word one of the notes of the Church, argue in a circle. Every Christian receives the knowledge of the truth from some Christian society, but not in such a sense as precludes him from examining the pretensions to purity of the very community from which he has received it: and such a knowledge of the truth he must be supposed to have before the question can occur to him, which is, and which is not, a true Church? For, as Gerhard well remarks, the whole controversy concerning the notes of the Church is one, not between Christians and infidels, but between those who, acknowledging the inspiration of Scripture, and professing faith in Christ, are in doubt which, among various societies calling themselves Christian, have a right to that title.*

The foregoing observations are intended to explain the positive ground upon which the validity of the Protestant notes rests: it may be added, however, that whatever be the force of the objection just mentioned, as urged by the Romanist, it may be retorted with exactly the same force against his own notes. For if it be illogical in the Protestant to pre-suppose in the inquirer a knowledge of what the pure doctrine of Christ is, it is equally so in the Romanist to presuppose in him a knowledge of the idea of the true Church: but this he is compelled to do. The inquirer is directed to examine which of several professing Christian communities exhibits most clearly the notes of visible unity, sanctity, &c.; obviously, it is here assumed that he has, from some quarter or other, convinced himself that these *are* the true notes of the Church; that is, that he already possesses the true idea of the Church. Whence has he acquired this knowledge? Not from Scripture, for this brings us back to Protestant ground: not from the Church, for which the true Church is he is not supposed to know: what third source of knowledge remains it is difficult to tell. The fact is, that, on either side, something must be, and is presupposed, as a first principle, to serve as a criterion of truth: the only difference is that, while with the Protestant this ἀρχὴ, or first principle, is a knowledge of divine truth gathered ultimately from Scripture, with the Romanist it is a knowledge of what the true Church is, gathered we know not whence. If it be said, that

* "Monendum illud nos hoc loco de talibus notis agere, quæ proprie et immediate ab illis attendendæ sunt qui in ecclesia Christiana versantur et ambigunt, quinam Christianorum cœtus sint vera, sincera, et incorrupta ecclesia, hoc est, qui admittunt Scripturas. Quod enim Gentiles attinet qui Scripturarum Sacrarum auctoritatem non admittunt, illis ex testimonio ecclesiæ, et κριτηρίοις internis, Scripturæ Sacræ auctoritas prius demonstranda est, antequam ex doctrinâ, hoc est, ex congruentiâ doctrinæ cum Scripturis Sanctis de ecclesiâ sincera et incorrupta judicare possint."—Loc. xxiii. c. 10.

the true idea of the Church is to be learned from the Church, we reply, borrowing Moehler's own words, We inquire what the notes of the Church are, because we would ascertain which the true Church is, with the view of learning from it the doctrine of Christ: if now we are told that the true notes of the Church are what the true Church pronounces to be such, the answer is manifestly nothing but the question itself: that is, it is no real answer at all.

PART II.

THE ATTRIBUTES, OR PREDICATES, OF THE CHURCH.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

According to Protestant views, the attributes of unity, sanctity, and catholicity, belong, in their highest signification, only to the true Church, or mystical body of Christ, and cannot be predicated, except in a modified sense, of the visible church. Still, the latter, as being the manifestation of the former, possesses a relative and imperfect unity, sanctity, and catholicity; for every inward property of the true Church strives, like that Church itself, after a corresponding visible expression of itself, and, to a certain extent, succeeds in attaining thereto. Hence, in discussing this part of the subject, it will be convenient to consider each of the properties in question; first, as it inheres in its proper subject — the true Church, — and then as it expresses itself visibly in the aggregate of particular societies which make up the visible Church. The fourth property which the Constantinopolitan creed assigns — viz. apostolicity — does not here fall under consideration; for there are only two senses in which a Church can be said to be an apostolic one, — either as holding and teaching apostolic doctrine, in which point of view apostolicity is identical with the pure preaching of the Word, and becomes a note of local churches; or as possessing a ministry derived from the Apostles, in whatever manner such derivation may be supposed to have proceeded, and the questions relating to the Christian ministry are reserved for discussion in a subsequent part of this work.

Previously, however, to entering upon the inquiry, a few words will be necessary on the origin and import of these terms which, as expressing essential properties of the Church, have passed into the Creeds. Two only of them — Unity and Sanctity — are derived directly from Scripture; unless indeed we may trace the term "Apostolical" to Ephes. ii. 20., where St. Paul describes Christians as being built upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets." The unity of the Church is set forth in the well-known passage of the same epistle: — "There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (c. iv. 4 — 6.); and its sanctity in a subsequent passage: — "Christ loved the Church,

and gave Himself for it, that He might cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (c. v. 26, 27.). The predicate "Catholic," on the contrary, is, as is well known, one which came into use subsequently to the apostolic age: it is a complex term, comprising several ideas, which it may be well to explain more distinctly.

In modern ecclesiastical language, Catholic means universal; and by the catholicity of the Church is commonly understood its capability of universal diffusion, as contrasted with the Jewish religion, which was confined to one people and one country. But this was not the only (indeed it may be doubted whether it was the primary) meaning of the word when first it came into use: the original idea intended to be conveyed by it seems to have been that of organic unity, or the idea of a whole (ὅλον) composed of various parts, which have no proper existence independently of that of which they are parts; as, for example, the human body, which is not a mere aggregate of similar or different members, but an organised totality.* It was not, therefore, so much in opposition to Judaism as to heresy — the principle of division — that the Church first received the title of Catholic; as we may gather from one of the earliest examples, if not the very earliest, of the use of the word, — that occurring in the epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnæans: "Wheresoever the Bishop shall be seen, there let the people also be; as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic church." The parallelism here drawn shows what Ignatius meant by Catholic. With him, as every reader of his epistles is aware, the Bishop is, in each particular church, the representative and organ of Christ, — the visible centre of unity to all the believers of that locality; apart from whom (with his presbyters and deacons) a church has no proper existence.† This view of the episcopal office he illustrates by a reference to the relation existing between Christ and the Catholic church: his conception, therefore, of the latter must have been that of an organised body under Christ its head and centre of unity: and this, apparently, is what he intends to express by the word Catholic.‡ But however this

* Ὅλος is distinguished from ἅπας, as *totus* is from *omnis* in Latin, or "the whole" from "all" in English. The "whole army" conveys to the mind a different idea from "all the men of the army:" in the former case, the men comprising the army are viewed as a body united under a head; in the latter as a collection of individuals.

† Χωρὶς τούτων ἐκκλησία οὐ καλεῖται.—Ad. Trall.

‡ This passage of Ignatius may be cited as an instance of the embarrassments attending all theories of the one true Church, which make it a visibly organized body, and yet reject

may be, it is certain that in later writers the Church is called Catholic, quite as much to distinguish it from sects as to express its universality. Three distinct notions were thus comprised under the predicate Catholic in its original acceptation: unity, strictly so called, or the connexion of the members of Christ's body with the Head and with each other; oneness — *i. e.* exclusiveness — as distinguished from unity, for obviously there cannot be two Catholic or universal churches;* and Universality, or Catholicity in its ordinary sense. All these are inseparable properties of the Church: there is one body animated by one spirit; there is only one such body; and this body is, or may be, universally diffused. Thus, excluding apostolicity, there still remain for consideration four distinct attributes of the body of Christ; — Unity, Oneness, Sanctity, and Universality. Of these, however, only the first three furnish matter for illustrating the differences between Protestants and Romanists, since the universality of the Church is acknowledged by both parties, and in the same sense; the Protestant confessions being careful to disavow any affinity of sentiment with the Donatists, who held that the Catholic church, having disappeared from the rest of the world, was confined to their own sect.† Hence Bellarmin, in making Catholicity a note of the Church, is driven to insist, not upon the thing itself, but upon the name of Catholic, which he endeavours to appropriate exclusively to his own communion. The remaining three attributes we now proceed to discuss, in the order above mentioned.

the doctrine of the Roman Pontiff. The Protestant, understanding by the Catholic Church the mystical body of Christ, fully goes along with the assertion, "where Christ is, there is the Catholic Church," which is nothing more than saying, that where the head is there is the body. But the Catholic Church of Ignatius was, as appears from his comparing it with a visible local church under its bishop, one visible society, — the visible union of all Christians; and the question immediately arose, where was he to find a visible centre of unity standing in the same relation to the whole Church in which the bishop did to each local church? In the time of Ignatius, no such visible head existed, for the church system had not yet become developed into the Papacy: hence, instead of the Roman Pontiff, he makes Christ himself such a centre of unity: to the obvious damage, however, of the theory, for with a spiritual invisible head a visible and therefore mixed body is not susceptible of combination. See Moehler's observations upon this passage in his work, Einheit in der Kirche, p. 265.

* This is what the Fathers usually mean by *unitas ecclesiæ*—*e. g.* the subject of Cyprian's tract *De Unitate Ecclesiæ* is not the internal unity of the church, but its exclusiveness — the oneness of the Church. On the other hand, the work of Augustin which bears the same title as that of Cyprian is in reality neither upon the unity nor the oneness, but upon the catholicity, of the Church. "Quæstio certe inter nos versatur, Ubi est ecclesia, utrum apud nos an apud illos (Donatistas)? Quæ utique vera est, quam majores nostri Catholicam nominarunt."—Aug. de Unit, Eccles. s. 2. This shows how closely these three attributes were, in the minds of the Fathers, associated together.

† "Damnamus ergo Donatistas qui ecclesiam in nescio quos Africæ coarctabant angulos." —1 Conf. Hel. c. 17.

CHAPTER I.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

THE unity of the Church is a phrase which admits of a variety of interpretations. Sometimes, as has been already remarked, it is used to express what should be more properly called the oneness of the Church; sometimes the points in which visible churches agree; and sometimes, again, it signifies not the doctrine or the fact of the unity of the Church, but the duty of Christians to cultivate a spirit of union and brotherly love. With this latter meaning of the phrase we have here no concern; for in this sense it denotes not a permanent attribute of the Church, but a desirable object which Christians should constantly keep in view: whereas, whatever be the amount of unanimity actually attained among Christians, be it more or be it less, the fact of the unity of the Church remains unaltered; Scripture affirming, not that there ought to be, but that "there is, one body and one spirit," that "we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another," that "as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ," — *i. e.* Christ and His Church.* To avoid ambiguity, then, it will be proper to state that by the unity of the Church is here meant its organic unity, whether this be internal or external, or both: what we are now concerned with is the mode in which the Church is one body under one head, for this is the proper notion of organic unity, as distinguished from uniformity which may exist among several distinct things.

St. Paul, in Ephes. iv. 4 — 6., not only asserts the general fact that "there is one body and one spirit," grounding thereupon an exhortation to Christian unanimity, but also enumerates the various aspects in which the Church may be said to be one: — "Ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all;" which, from the formal manner in which they are stated, would seem to be, whatever they may

* Rom. xii. 5.; 1 Cor. xii. 12.

mean, the fundamental principles of unity which belong to the Church of Christ. It is evident, however, that the true organic unity of the Church is comprised in the first words of the apostle, — "there is one body and one spirit;" the first clause expressing the actual connexion of Christians with their glorified Head, the second the internal principle of life which unites them to the head and to each other. The other unities mentioned by the apostle — one faith, one hope, one Lord, one baptism — are rather consequences or concomitants than formal causes of this organic unity: they express the principal particulars in which the essential unity of the Church, which, as a fact, must be presupposed, manifests itself; for the Church must be constituted in Christ — must exist as one body animated by one spirit — before she can realize to herself the fact that she has one faith, one hope, &c. So in the human body, which in Scripture is the ordinary figure by which the constitution of the Church is illustrated, the body must have a living existence before the essential unity which pervades all the members of it, however different in function, becomes a matter capable of being reflected upon. Bellarmin's remarks upon this point are very just: — "The unity of the Church," he observes, "is manifold, as firstly, the unity of efficient cause, viz. God's calling; secondly, the unity of scope or final end, viz. eternal salvation; thirdly, the unity of means, that is, faith, the sacraments, and the ordinances; fourthly, the unity of the Spirit by whom (*ut externo et separato rectore*) the whole Church is governed; fifthly, the unity of the same head, viz. Christ and his vicar the Roman Pontiff; and sixthly, the unity which consists in the connexion of the members with each other and with the head. Of these unities, those which properly make the Church one are the two last, viz. the subordination of the members to one head, and their union with each other."*

Protestants hold that organic unity belongs only to the mystical body of Christ. It is this only that can in any proper sense of the word be said to be one society under one head. And of this it can be said that it is so. Every member of it is a living branch of the true vine, vitally incorporated in Christ. Christ himself is its centre of unity. The society is under the government of the spirit of Christ. The law which it obeys is the law of God written upon the hearts of its members. That the body is a spiritual one,

* De Eccles. l. iii. c. 5. With respect to the other unities he remarks: — "per primam ecclesia non tam est una quàmex uno; per secundam non tam est una quàm ad unum; per tertiam, non tam est una quàm per unum; per quartam, non tam est una quàm sub uno."

and at present, as a body, invisible, makes nothing against the fact of its existence but for it, for it is only a body of this kind that could belong to a spiritual and invisible head.

That Scripture speaks of the Church as in this sense one, too frequently and emphatically to allow us to explain away its statements, has been already observed, and the remarks before made need not here be repeated. It may be added, however, that the essentially spiritual nature of the body is apparent from the fact that the "dead in Christ," the disembodied "spirits of just men made perfect," are members of it equally with the saints upon earth: from which it follows that no visible manifestation of it, in its proper corporate unity, is possible before the day of Christ.

Romanism recognizes the doctrine of this organic unity of the Church, and endeavours in the tridentine system to give it an adequate expression: only, by transferring it from its proper subject, the mystical body of Christ, to a visible society, that is, by carnalizing the idea of the Church, that system transforms the true spiritual unity of Christ's body into an outward political one. The unity of the Papacy is, it must be allowed, a real organic unity, and presents the same resemblance to the true doctrine of Scripture upon the subject, which a counterfeit coin does to a real one. The Papal unity is, as Bellarmin candidly admits, that of a secular monarchy. Under a visible head and centre of unity are arranged in a long descending series the different ecclesiastical orders, corresponding to the officers of state in a political community;—an hierarchy, resembling, in the language of the Council of Trent, the orderly array of an army;* while the "plebs," or common people, as they are significantly called, compose the base of the pyramid, the whole presenting one of the most skilfully adjusted, and (in a worldly point of view) admirable, polities which the world has ever seen. It is this imposing aspect of unity, this true organic combination of parts, presented by the Church of Rome, that has attracted to her pale so many persons of ardent mind, who, setting out from the position that the body of Christ is a visible corporation, have looked in vain in other systems for any thing answering to such an idea.

For, in truth, of all those theories of the Church which make its essence to lie in its external characteristics, that of Trent is alone consistent with itself, alone has any pretension to complete-

* "Ecclesiasticam hierarchiam quæ est ut castrorum acies ordinata." Conc. Trid. sess. 23. c. 4.

ness. This is strikingly apparent in the point now under discussion. When the Cyprianist, for example, who limits the essential, because divine, element of Church polity to the episcopal regimen, regarding the higher forms of organization as of human origin, is pressed to state his view of the organic unity of the Church, all that he can present us with is an aggregate of distinct and independent communities, connected merely by a *similarity* of government; which is by no means an adequate representation of the Scriptural doctrine respecting the body of Christ. As the profession of one faith, one hope, and the practice of one baptism, do not, of themselves, make the visible Churches which agree in these points, in any proper sense, one society, so neither does mere sameness of government, whether episcopal or any other. When Cyprian speaks of the "one episcopate of which each member has an undivided share," his language indeed plainly shows the point to which things were tending, viz. the establishment of a visible centre and representative of the united episcopate (even in Cyprian's own works the rudiments of such a visible centre are discernible); but his theory, taking it by itself, is plainly insufficient to express the organic unity of the Church. According to that theory, each bishop is a monarch in his own sphere, owing no submission to any other bishop; whence it follows that the whole episcopate is nothing but an aggregate of these monarchies, without a central government: which is no organic unity. It seems difficult to refuse assent to the following observations of one, who at one time was a zealous maintainer of Cyprian's doctrine of unity, but who subsequently became sensible of its incompleteness, except when viewed as a stage of transition to the Papacy: — "It may be possibly suggested that this universality which the fathers ascribe to the Catholic Church lay in its apostolical descent, or again in its episcopacy; and that it was one, not as being one kingdom, or civitas, 'at unity with itself,' with one and the same intelligence in every part, one sympathy, one ruling principle, one organization, one communion, but because, though consisting of a number of independent communities at variance (if so be) with each other even to a breach of communion; nevertheless all these were possessed of a legitimate succession of clergy, or all governed by bishops, priests, and deacons. But who will in seriousness maintain that relationship, or that resemblance, makes two bodies one? England and Prussia are both monarchies; are they, therefore, one kingdom? England and the United States are from one stock; can they, therefore, be called one state? England and Ireland are peopled by

different races; yet are they not one kingdom still? If unity lies in the Apostolical succession, an act of schism is, from the nature of the case, impossible; for as no one can reverse his parentage, so no Church can undo the fact that its clergy have come by lineal descent from the Apostles. Either there is no such sin as schism, or unity does not lie in the episcopal form, or in episcopal ordination."* To which may be added another striking passage, bearing on the same point, from Moehler's book, "the Unity of the Church:" — "Whether the Papacy is to be considered as one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Catholic Church was long doubtful to me; nay, I had taken up the contrary opinion; for the organic combination of all the parts into one whole, which the idea of the Catholic Church absolutely requires, seemed fully attained by the unity of the episcopate, as that unity has just been explained; and besides, it is manifest that the history of the first three centuries contains very few materials for settling the question of the supremacy of the bishop of Rome decisively. But a more comprehensive, and deeper, consideration of the scriptural notices of Peter, and of history, together with a lively insight into the organization of the Church, conducted me at length irresistibly to the doctrine of the Papacy. The historical construction of the idea of the primacy, as it unfolded itself to my mind, was as follows: — That to stop at the point of progress hitherto attained (viz. the gradual consolidation of the episcopate) would be to leave the development of the unity of the Church incomplete, is evident at first sight. There is wanting to the chain one link, to the building its topstone. If in every perfect organization, such as the universe, the particular component parts are themselves in their turn organic, so that in each member the type of the whole is visible, and *vice versâ*, the energy that animates the whole reproduces in each particular part the characteristic form of that whole; if this be so, as it is, then it is evident that if the organization of the Church be arrested at the point at which we have now arrived, viz. the episcopate, as if at that point it is to be considered as complete, the ascending series will be suddenly broken off, and the energy that moulds the whole so debilitated as not to be able to perfect the whole work after the proposed type. In the diocese we found the bishop to be the central point of unity; in a wider circle the metropolitan, as the cen-

* Newman on Development, p. 258. De Maistre has expressed the same thought more concisely: "Soutenir qu'une foule d'Eglises independantes forment une église *une et universelle*, c'est soutenir, en d'autres termes, que tous les gouvernements politiques de l'Europe ne forment qu'un seul gouvernement *un et universel*." Du Pape, l. i. c. l.

tre of a certain number of bishops: next came the unity of all the bishops (the Cyprianic theory); but of this latter unity we have as yet discovered no living personal representative." * &c. And then he goes on to show that in the bishop of Rome the required visible centre of unity is found. The passage is valuable, as illustrating the course of thought by which, the patristic theory of the Church being taken as a starting-point, the idea of the Papacy arose in men's minds, and was at length worked out. The mere intercommunion of distinct episcopal Churches is not, it must be repeated, any more than the intercommunion of presbyterian Churches, a true organic unity; and certainly it does not satisfy the statements of Scripture concerning the unity of Christ's mystical body.

It need hardly be remarked, that much less does the existence of certain common principles of unity among different Churches make them one body under one head. There is of course a sense in which the aggregate of visible Christian societies may be called one Church: they profess, as Pearson observes, the same faith, they celebrate the same sacraments, they acknowledge one Lord Jesus Christ: in this sense there is a visible Catholic Church. But it is obvious that a unity of this kind is nothing higher than that which subsists between the monarchical states of Europe, which agree in being founded on the same principle of government, but are otherwise distinct communities, acknowledging no common head upon earth. Similarly, there is a sense in which Christ may be called the Head of this visible Catholic Church. He is so, not immediately and by direct union, but on account of the inseparable connexion between the visible and the true Church, the members of the latter being not to be looked for outside the pale of the former. Churches acknowlege Christ as their Lord and Head, but *as such* they are not in vital union with Him: this can only be predicated of the individual members of such Churches, and not of all the members of them. If the visible and the true Church were, as regards their members, perfectly co-extensive, Christ would be the Head of either of them indifferently in the same sense; as it is, it is only improperly, and mediately, that He is the Head of the former; He is the Head of it because it comprehends the latter, of which He is truly the Head.

In short, between the doctrine of Trent and the Protestantism of the Reformation, there would seem to be, as regards the point in question, no tenable *via media*. If organic unity be predicable

* Einheit in der Kirche, p. 237.

of the Church, if it must necessarily, and under all circumstances, exist as one body under one head, it must be acknowledged that the tridentine system alone presents a *visible* representation corresponding to such an idea.

Little need be said concerning the secondary unities mentioned by St. Paul: "one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all;" which, it has been remarked, are consequences of the spiritual constitution of the Church in union with its glorified Head. These are the points in which the Church is *consciously* one; and, like the organic unity itself, they belong in their true and proper signification only to the mystical body of Christ. For the immediate reference of St. Paul's expressions is, not to the agreement of Churches, but of Christians with each other; not therefore to the mere *profession* of one faith,* one Lord, &c., but to the internal facts of the spiritual life, all of which are comprised in these unities. All the true members of Christ's body have one Lord, Christ in them the hope of glory; one saving faith in that Lord, consisting in their conscious dependence upon Him for every spiritual blessing; one baptism or regeneration, for such in truth is the spiritual import of that sacrament; and in consequence of this regeneration one God and Father of all. It is evident that the Apostle's meaning is, not that all true Christians express their faith in the same words, or administer baptism with precisely the same circumstantials, but that whether they do this or not, they *have* but one faith, one Lord, one baptism. In another aspect, however, these fundamental points of union become visible principles of unity, both between Christians individually considered and between Churches. They serve this purpose as soon as the faith which the Church at first holds implicitly comes, from whatever cause, to be reflected upon and analysed, or is transferred from the sphere of immediate consciousness to that of the understanding, and becomes expressed in creeds and formularies. In this sense we speak of individuals, or Churches, *professing* the same faith, acknowledging one Lord, &c. Such professions of Christian faith, together with the two sacraments, constitute bonds of union among local Churches, which remain indeed distinct societies, but are one in so far as they are founded upon certain

* Olshausen well remarks that πίστις in the passage cited must mean not the "fides quæ creditur," but the "fides quâ creditur;" for in the former sense it would include all the members of the series, all of them being articles of the Christian faith; whereas it is evidently spoken of as something distinct from the rest. He also accounts satisfactorily for the omission of the Lord's Supper from the catalogue of fundamental unities. See his commentary in loc.

common principles; just as the various literary societies of Europe may be called one, because they have the same general object, viz. the promotion of literature, but they are not one society. It is in this sense that Hooker speaks of the "unity of the visible body and Church of Christ," which "consisteth in that uniformity which all the several persons thereunto belonging have by reason of that one Lord whose servants they all profess themselves to be, that one faith which they all acknowledge, that one baptism whereby they are all initiated;" "The visible Church of Christ is therefore one in outward profession of those things which supernaturally appertain to the very essence of Christianity, and are necessarily required in every Christian man." * Wherever these conditions exist, the visible Church Catholic is one for the purposes of intercommunion and brotherly recognition; for neither in this nor in any other passage of the New Testament, is sameness of Church government reckoned among the essential principles of visible unity. Hence the Protestant doctrine, that the pure preaching of the Word and the due administration of the Sacraments are the essential notes of a true Church.

In pursuance of the plan laid down, we have now to inquire whether and how far the organic unity of the mystical body of Christ, which in its proper essence is internal and unseen, has succeeded in producing any visible representation of itself; whether, and how far, a visible organic unity is attainable, and has been attained? In discussing this question, we are necessarily led to consider the origin and nature of the episcopate, the third of those orders of the ministry for which a divine authority is claimed; a subject which, though its natural place may seem to be in immediate connexion with the foregoing inquiry concerning the rudiments of ecclesiastical polity, has been purposely reserved for discussion under the head of the unity of the Church. For whatever other functions and prerogatives belong, according to the Church theory, to the episcopate, it is of the three orders of the ministry that to which emphatically is assigned the office of representing the unity of the Church: while presbyters and deacons are but congregational officers, the bishop, on the contrary, is the representative of an order divinely instituted to be the means of binding the whole Church together, and to be the organ of its visible unity. No one can have looked into the epistles of Ignatius, in which the episcopal theory first meets us, without per-

* Eccles. Pol. lib. iii. c. i.

ceiving that this is the leading idea connected in his mind with the episcopate. His fundamental notion of the office is as follows: — Christ, the one and undivided Saviour, has multiplied himself, so to speak, in the person of the Catholic bishops: through them as His organs and representatives He is present in each particular Church; and by means of the episcopate it is that these visible Churches are connected together, and form one Church. It is in Cyprian's writings, however, that we find the fullest and strongest statements upon this subject. According to him, the episcopate is a continuation of the apostolate, the Catholic bishops being the successors of the inspired Twelve, and inheritors of their functions, those only being excepted which were peculiar to them as inspired persons. As the Apostles then, while they lived, constituted a bond of union for the whole Church — Christian societies, otherwise distinct communities, being connected together by their common subjection to the Apostolic college — so the one and undivided episcopate, which has succeeded to the apostolate, cements together the whole of Christendom; each bishop, besides his local powers, possessing an authority over the whole Church, not as an individual, but as a member of the episcopal college. Such is the true import of the celebrated passage: — "Episcopatus unus est cujus à singulis in solidum pars tenetur;" the one abstract office having in the bishop of each particular Church its organ and representative.

That episcopacy should be represented by these writers as of divine institution — nay, traced up to Christ's own appointment — is only what might have been expected. As a part of that visible polity in which the essence or differentia of the Church is supposed to lie, it must claim this character; but besides what it has in common with the other two orders, it possesses a sacredness and an importance peculiar to itself. Of all the three, it is the most essential to the Church, the most divine.* The bishop is to each believer the representative of Christ, the chief organ through whom the covenanted grace of God is derived to the Church at large. More important still is the privilege which he only possesses, of furnishing the Church with pastors: presbyters may spiritually generate the sons of God, but presbyters themselves can only be generated by the bishop. He is in each Church the symbol and centre of unity. Moreover, the Church being an institution for

* "Sacrosancta synodus declarat, præter cæteros ecclesiasticos gradas, episcopos qui in Apostolorum locum successerunt, ad hunc hierarchicum ordinem præcipue pertinere." Conc. Trid. lib. xxiii. c. 4.

moulding men, by means of outward discipline, into the image of God, the power of coercion, which is necessary to carry out such a system, and which must be lodged somewhere, is committed to the bishop, who is the repository of the Church's legislative and executive authority. Obedience to the bishop is therefore obedience to Christ himself. Such is each bishop in his own diocese; — a mighty spiritual potentate, invested with plenary authority over God's heritage, and accountable to none but Christ himself. From such a view of episcopacy, it follows, of course, that it is essential to the very being of a Church; for where there is no bishop, there is no covenanted grace, no legitimate ministry, no sacraments. This conclusion may not be actually drawn from the premises: exceptions and allowances may be introduced into the theory: subtle distinctions may be instituted between the unavoidable and the culpable abandonment of the episcopal polity: but all such saving clauses are admitted at the expense of logical consistency, for if the essence of the Church lie in a certain external polity, the absence of that polity, however occasioned, must involve the destruction of the subject, just as the dissolution of the human body, whether it be the consequence of accident, or of an act of self-destruction, terminates the earthly existence of the individual.

The historical facts bearing upon this subject must now be investigated, and the results laid before the reader. If these facts furnish good reason for believing that the episcopate was instituted on the same principles which guided the Apostles in the institution of the two inferior orders, — that, like them, it came into being, not as a divinely prescribed ordinance without which the Church could have no existence, but simply as a supply for a felt want, an extension of the organization of Christian societies called for by the circumstances of those societies, and of the age, — that, in short, episcopacy is the offspring of the Church, not the Church of episcopacy, — we shall have gained an additional confirmation of the conclusion already arrived at, viz. that the Church is not, in its idea, an institution of external discipline, but has its true being, its specific difference, within. In this point of view, the following remarks may be regarded as a kind of supplement to those already made in a preceding section on the polity of the Church, and therefore as completing the proof of the main position insisted upon in the first part of the present work.

With the view of fully considering the subject, it is proposed, in the following inquiry, to examine, first, whether episcopacy can be proved to be of divine right, or to have been instituted by

Christ himself; secondly, whether the *sole* evidence of Scripture is sufficient to enable us to pronounce it to be of apostolical institution; and lastly, whether we can fairly draw this latter conclusion from the *joint* testimony of Scripture and ecclesiastical history. These points being settled, some remarks will be made on what may be called the natural history of episcopacy, or the causes which led to the establishment of that form of Church government.

1. Upon the first head, but a few words are necessary. The passage cannot be produced from the New Testament in which the Saviour is himself said to have instituted the episcopate any more than the two inferior grades of the Christian ministry. Sufficient reasons have been already given why we should expect that our Lord, instead of himself prescribing the external form which the Christian ministry was to assume, should have committed the whole organization of Christian societies to the Apostles, the inspired ministers of the Spirit. Had any distinct testimony, referring episcopacy to Christ's own institution, been adducible from Scripture, recourse would never have been had to arguments such as that drawn from the several missions of the Twelve and the Seventy, in whom, it has been said, we have the prototypes of the two orders of bishops and presbyters; — bishops without a diocese, and presbyters without a church!* What our Lord's purpose may have been in issuing two distinct commissions for the exercise of, apparently, the very same functions, we know not; but that there is no difference between the instructions issued to the Twelve and the Seventy, and the powers conferred upon them respectively, is most certain. Each body of disciples was commissioned to "go before his face into every city and place, whither He himself was about to come;" upon each a similar power was bestowed of performing miraculous cures, and to each the Divine presence was equally assured. The principle of ministerial imparity, clearly visible as it is in Scripture, could never have been inferred from this transaction taken by itself. In fact, there is every reason for believing that the commissions issued on this occasion were but temporary, and for a special purpose; for the Seventy appear no more in the inspired history, their dissolution, as a body, having apparently

* See Bishop Taylor, who rests the divine right of episcopacy upon this "rock" as he calls it, but in truth most sandy foundation: "This office of the ordinary apostleship, or episcopacy, derives its foundation from a rock; Christ's own distinguishing the apostolate from the function of presbyters," &c. Episcopacy asserted, s. 6. The assumption, so covertly introduced, that the apostolate and the episcopate are one and the same thing, is very characteristic of Taylor's general style of reasoning.

taken place as soon as, having fulfilled their mission, they returned to Christ. That some of the individuals who composed the body became afterwards, according to the report which Eusebius has preserved,* preachers of the Gospel, or presbyters, in the proper sense of the word, is very probable; for it is to be presumed that our Lord's original selection of them was founded upon the fact of their evincing qualities which would equally fit them for the Christian ministry; but it proves nothing as to the permanent character of the commission given to them by Christ. That Ananias, who laid his hands on St. Paul, one of those whom tradition numbers among the Seventy, was a presbyter, rests on no certain evidence of Scripture; the contrary may rather be inferred from the manner in which he is mentioned in Acts ix. 10.

It is no matter of surprise that some of the later fathers in their solicitude to establish the divine right of episcopacy, should have persuaded themselves that the commissions of the Twelve and the Seventy present an analogy to the two higher orders of the Christian ministry; but the fathers had on this point no other means of forming a judgment than those which are equally accessible to ourselves, — viz. the volume of Scripture.

If there is no proof that Christ, in His own person, instituted the episcopate, neither does it anywhere appear that He gave His Apostles commandment to do so. After our Lord rose from the dead, "He showed Himself alive" (to His Apostles) "by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:"† among these things, it is urged, must have been instructions respecting the polity of the Church. An argument which rests upon no tangible fact or statement, may surely be dismissed without further notice. If it cannot be said that Christ did not, during those days, deliver to His Apostles a system of church government, neither can it be said that He did; and here, as far as this passage is concerned, the matter must end. It is possible, indeed, that our Lord's discourses, during that important interval, may have included some directions respecting the visible organization of Christian societies; but whether, as a matter of fact, they did so, it is now impossible to say, for they who alone could have given us any authentic information on the subject have not done so. The Apostles nowhere draw a line of distinction between the regulations of polity which proceeded from themselves and those, if any, which they received

* Eccles. Hist. lib. i. c. 12.

† Acts i. 3.

from their divine Master; nowhere affirm that they received from Him any instructions whatever on this point. Where the Scripture leaves us in the dark, it seems most advisable to abstain from what can be at best a mere conjecture.

Not only is there no evidence that episcopacy emanated from Christ Himself directly, but even that indirect mode of divine appointment which belongs to the other two orders is here wanting. If the institution of presbyters and deacons cannot be traced up any more than that of episcopacy to Christ's own enactment, still, as we have seen, it was a matter of Providential arrangement that the synagogue, which furnished the idea of the two inferior grades of the ministry, should be in existence in order to receive upon itself, as a graft, the polity of Christian societies in its first stages. But, as regards episcopacy, the analogy of the synagogue fails us. While there can be no reasonable doubt respecting the derivation of the presbyters and deacons of a Christian congregation from the corresponding officers of the synagogue, that institution does not, with anything like the same degree of certainty, present us with the historical type of a Christian bishop. It has been already remarked that in the New Testament the word *ἀρχισυνάγωγος* signifies, most commonly, not one particular officer, superior in authority to the other members of the ecclesiastical senate, but, either an ordinary member of that senate, or, where there was no such assembly, the single ruler, or president, of the synagogue. Vitringa, indeed, has suggested what is in itself extremely probable, that, as is usual in deliberative assemblies, the elders of the synagogue were accustomed to select one of themselves, superior to the rest either in age or capacity, to act as president of the assembly for the time being, or perhaps as perpetual president; in which custom he seems to himself to discover the rudiment of the Christian episcopate:* the proofs, however, which he adduces of the existence of such a primus inter pares in the Jewish institution are not very conclusive. But independently of the insufficiency of the evidence adduced to prove that the synagogue possessed any office resembling that of a Christian bishop, Vitringa's hypothesis is burdened with another difficulty of a more formidable character, which appears to render it altogether inadmissible, — viz. that, even supposing that the Jewish council was commonly presided over by an officer, styled *ἀρχισυνάγωγος*, whose office was either temporary or permanent, we

* De Syn. Vet. lib. ii. p. 586 — 589.

must bear in mind that he was merely a functionary of the particular synagogue to which he belonged, a congregational minister without the jurisdiction of a higher kind. Very different is the Christian bishop, as he appears in the pages of Ignatius, or of Cyprian. Besides being connected with a particular Church, he belongs to an order which represents the unity of the whole Church, and his office extends its influence far beyond the limits of his particular locality. With the offices of the synagogue no such idea was connected; nor could it be, for the synagogue had its centre of unity not in itself, but in the temple; it was their common connexion with the temple that bound together the multiplicity of synagogues scattered over the Roman empire. The ἀρχισυνάγωγος, if any such officer existed, was but the president of a single synagogue; the bishop is the centre of unity to many congregations, and not only the chief pastor of his own diocese, but an officer of the Church universal. Hence, while the synagogue would naturally supply a model for the strictly congregational ministers of a Christian Church, — such as the presbyters and deacons, — it would not so naturally suggest the idea of a superior pastor, whose authority was to extend over several churches, and through whom those churches were to be connected with the visible Church throughout the world.

But did not Christ, in instituting, as He confessedly did, the Apostolate, institute at the same time episcopacy; for what were the Apostles but bishops, and what are bishops but successors of the Apostles? Such is the argument put forward by those who, at all hazards, would trace up the polity of the Christian Church to a divine prescription. In reply to it, we can only ask, as before, where is it recorded that Christ invested the Apostles with the episcopal office any more than with that of presbyters and deacons? The powers which were afterwards appropriated to bishops, they undoubtedly did exercise; but the question is, not concerning powers, but concerning a distinct office alleged to have been formally instituted in the persons of the Apostles.

So much misapprehension appears to prevail upon this point, and so perpetually is it repeated that the Apostles exercised a proper episcopate, that, though the subject has been already touched upon, it may be worth while to make some additional observations upon it.

In one sense the Apostles were not only deacons, presbyters, and bishops, but metropolitans and patriarchs also; nay, if we suppose the authority and prerogatives claimed for the Roman

pontiff capable of being exercised and enjoyed by several persons in common, the Apostolic college was a papacy, the only real one which the world has ever seen. The decisions of the Apostles in matters of faith were infallible; their supreme authority over the whole Church undoubted and constantly exercised. But the question is, in what capacity did they exercise the various functions, which in Scripture they are said to have exercised? When they distributed alms, did they do so as deacons? when they taught, did they teach as presbyters? when they ordained, did they ordain as bishops? Unless this is established, nothing of argumentative value is gained by urging the mere fact that they acted on different occasions as deacons, presbyters, and bishops, were afterwards accustomed to act. For they may have acted throughout as Apostles, — as persons, that is, upon whom a *general* power had been conferred by Christ to set in order everything relating to the Church both in polity and in doctrine, and who exercised that power in different ways and on different occasions. Thus the Roman dictator combined in himself the several powers distributed between the ordinary magistrates of the republic; but when he acted, he did so in every instance as dictator; not in one case as Consul, in another, as Prætor, and in a third, as Quæstor. The devolution of powers to an individual is not the devolution to him of the formal offices to which those powers are, in ordinary times, attached. The commander of an army is frequently called upon to discharge the functions of a statesman or an ambassador, but he is not on that account, formally, a civil functionary. It is in this light that the government of the Church by the Apostles is to be regarded. They are nowhere found claiming for themselves a series of distinct offices, or affirming that they do one act by virtue of one office, and a different act by virtue of another: whatever they did they did as Apostles. When they taught or administered the sacraments, they exercised the same functions which were afterwards appropriated to presbyters, as distinguished from deacons; when they ordained, they performed an act which came to be the special prerogative of bishops; but, in both cases, they acted not as presbyters and bishops, but as Apostles: they acted by virtue of their general commission to do everything necessary for the establishment and edifying of the Church. Wherever they were, and whatever they did, they were Apostles; they never divested themselves of their proper character; they were always, and none but they were, the inspired messengers of the Spirit.

The Apostles received from Christ a general commission, with plenary authority over the whole church, and supernatural endowments to preserve them from error in the exercise of that authority. By virtue of this commission they taught, ruled, ordained, corrected abuses, decided points of doctrine, delivered blasphemers to Satan: but every one can see how defective the argument is, The Apostles governed and ordained; Bishops also, in subsequent times, governed and ordained; therefore the Apostles were Bishops. The mere performance of similar acts does not, as is obvious, establish the formal relation of predecessor and successor.

It will be urged, however, that while delegating to presbyters a commission to perform the ordinary functions of the ministry, — such as the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments, — the Apostles reserved to themselves and their deputies the powers of ordination and of excommunication. The question relating to excommunication we pass over for the present. With respect to what we now call ordination, the Apostles nowhere expressly reserve to themselves the power of setting apart persons to the office of the ministry; nowhere are they found to have laid it down as a rule, that to the validity of ordinations, their own presence, or that of their deputies, was essential. It is a fact, indeed, that none but the Apostles or their deputies appear in the New Testament to have ordained elders; and, as a matter of fact, valeat quantum; but we search in vain for any declaration to the effect that this was the peculiar function — the differentia, or specific characteristic — of the Apostolic office, considered apart from its confessedly extraordinary and temporary endowments. In one passage only of Scripture have we any intimation of what the Apostles themselves regarded as of the ordinary and perpetual functions of the ministry that which was peculiar to themselves — the passage, namely, in which they are found expressing a wish to be released from the secular labour of serving tables, in order that they might give themselves "continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Acts, vi. 4.). Here no mention is made of government or of ordination, as the special prerogative of the Apostolic office; and if it were not dangerous to lay too much stress upon a single passage, it might from this one be plausibly inferred that the special function of the Apostles, as representatives of the ordinary Christian ministry, has descended, not to bishops, but to presbyters, to whom it specially appertains to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Still, no doubt,

it remains matter of fact that, as a general rule, none but the Apostles, or their delegates, ordained; and an important fact it is: but of what argumentative value is it in the present connexion? For that the Apostles ordained by virtue of the episcopal office enveloped in their apostolate is nowhere told us; and this is the point that must be established, if it is to be proved that the Apostles were formally Bishops. Otherwise we have only an argument similar to that before mentioned,—viz. The Apostles only are found to have ordained; but in subsequent times, Bishops only ordained; therefore the Apostles were Bishops.

It is not, however, to be denied, that during the interval between the instituting of the two inferior orders, and that of Bishops, the Apostolic College presented an analogy to what the episcopate afterwards became; and to those who, not content with refusing to episcopacy the title of a divine institution, denounce it as positively unscriptural, it may fairly be replied that, from the time when the polity of the Church began to assume any visible consistence, three orders of the ministry are discernible in it—viz. deacons (including deaconesses), the order indifferently termed presbyters or overseers, and, superior to both, the Apostles. When a search is being made for Scriptural precedents, or hints in favour of episcopacy, the position of the Apostles, in reference to deacons and presbyters, will not be overlooked by those who are on the watch for intimations of the mind of the Spirit; but to affirm, as Cyprian does, that the Apostles were formally bishops,* is to speak without the warrant of Scripture, and in forgetfulness of the essential points of distinction between the Apostolic office, and that of a bishop in later times. For nothing surely but dogmatical prepossessions could have blinded Cyprian to the fact that the overseership of the Apostles—their personal prerogative of inspiration being altogether put out of view—differed in several important particulars from the episcopacy of a subsequent age. To take one point as an instance:—according to Cyprian's own idea of the episcopal office and the Catholic rule, each church should have its own, and no church more than one, bishop: the bishop, though he was the organ of communication between the various churches of Christendom, was essentially a local officer, and had no authority over any diocese but his own. The Apostolic authority, on the contrary, extended over the universal church; it was of the essence of the Apostles' over

* "Meminisse autem diaconi debent quoniam apostolos, id est, episcopos et præpositos, dominus elegit."—Epist. 65. Ad Rog.

seership not to be circumscribed by any local limits, but to embrace the whole of Christendom. The selection, by certain of their number, of different spheres of labour — Paul and Barnabas going unto the heathen, and James, Peter, and John, devoting themselves more particularly to the circumcision — presents no real analogy to the fixed oversight of one chief pastor in each church.

The truth is, the whole of the polity into which the Church is found at the close of the first century to have settled is of Apostolic, not of divine, institution; or divine only in so far as it is Apostolic. Christ gave to His Church Apostles: it was the Apostles who gave to the Church deacons, presbyters, and, finally, bishops. The episcopate can be traced to no higher a source than that to which the presbyterate and diaconate is traceable. The Apostolic office was altogether a peculiar one: it was vouchsafed by Christ for the purpose of founding and organizing Christian societies, but it was never intended to be a permanent part of their polity. When the Apostles had completed their work upon earth, they were removed for the very same reason that Christ Himself, having risen from the dead, did not remain in the world, — viz. that it was incompatible with the nature of a spiritual and universal dispensation that there should exist attached to any particular locality a living infallible tribunal; and for the same reason they neither had nor have any successors. Certain functions which the Apostles exercised continued to be exercised after their death by the ordinary ministers of the Church; but the Apostolic office ended with the persons of the Apostles, and has never since been vouchsafed to the Church. The place which the Apostles occupied while they lived is now filled, not by a living order of ministers, but by their own inspired writings, which constitute, or ought to constitute, the supreme authority in the Church of God. In these writings the Apostles yet live and speak: St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John, and St. Matthew, have not abdicated their office, or transferred it to other persons; they still govern the universal Church, decide points of doctrine, reform abuses, set in order Christian societies: so that there is no need, as there is no evidence, for the continuation of a living apostolate. The New Testament Scriptures, as they are the only real apostolate now in existence, so, are sufficient to supply to us the place of the inspired Twelve. It is possible, indeed, that all that is meant by terming the Apostles bishops, and therefore bishops successors of the Apostles, is, that bishops now perform certain ecclesiastical acts which the Apostles, while they remained upon earth, appeared to have reserved to

themselves and their delegates: but, if this be the case, why retain a phrase which is sure to mislead, and which has, in fact, given rise to serious errors? No instance, in truth, can be adduced more strikingly illustrative of the mischievous consequences of using incautious language in reference to sacred subjects, whether without an end in view or designedly to introduce a theory. If bishops are really successors of the Apostles, it follows that the united episcopate (supposing it to be, as it once was, united) is infallible in matters of faith; a dogma which is, in no essential point, different from the Romish doctrine of infallibility, since, equally with the latter, it transfers the seat of that prerogative from the Apostles represented in their writings to the existing Church. That each of the three orders of the Christian ministry presents, in certain points, a resemblance to the ordinary Apostolic functions is admitted; but similarity of functions by no means constitute identity of office, and nothing can be more groundless in fact, or more dangerous in tendency, than to assert of any particular order of the ministry — whether bishops or presbyters — that they are formally successors of the inspired Twelve.

2. But if episcopacy cannot be traced up to Christ Himself, may it not claim to be, at least, an Apostolical institution? Here, indeed, the ground beneath us becomes firmer: there is every reason to believe that it is an Apostolic appointment: meanwhile it cannot be denied that Scripture alone furnishes but slender data for our pronouncing it to be so. And this, be it observed, may be admitted without weakening the evidence of its Apostolicity. There may be proof sufficient to satisfy any reasonable mind that the Apostles bestowed on the Church, as their latest gift, episcopacy, and yet Scripture may not be the source whence the proof is to be drawn. Timothy and Titus may have been bishops of Ephesus and Crete respectively, and yet it may be impossible to prove from Scripture alone that they were so. And in truth it does seem an arduous task to attempt to discover in the inspired record, taken alone, the existence of an *order* of ministers, not Apostles, and yet superior to presbyters and deacons.

Besides the Apostles, two orders of ministers meet us in Scripture, distinguished by fixed titles of office, — presbyters or overseers (ἐπισκόποι), and deacons; both of them, if we are to regard the seven mentioned in Acts, vi. as the first deacons, of express Apostolical institution. No *order* of ministers other than these three — Apostles, Presbyters, and Deacons — are mentioned in the New Testament as forming part of the then existing polity of the

Church. For every attempt to establish a distinction between the presbyter and the episcopus of Scripture will proof fruitless; so abundant is the evidence which proves that they were but different appellations of the same official person. It is not from one, or two, but from a variety of passages that we infer this. One of the most conclusive proofs is that furnished by the well known address of St. Paul to the Ephesian elders in Acts, xx., in which the same persons, whom, at v. 28, St. Paul calls "bishops" (*ἐπισκόπους*) are described by St. Luke, at v. 17., as "the presbyters of the Church" of Ephesus.* In 1 Tim. iii. 1. the office termed *ἐπισκόπη* must, if Timothy was then formal bishop of Ephesus, be no other than that of presbyter; as indeed is evident from a comparison of the whole passage with the corresponding one in Titus, the qualifications required being precisely the same in both. Still more strikingly are the names interchanged in the passage just mentioned, Tit. i. 5—7.:—"For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders (*πρεσβυτέρους*) in every city: if any be blameless &c. For a bishop (*ἐπίσκοπος*) must be blameless" &c. St. Peter's language, too, is decisive as regards the point in question:—"The elders (*πρεσβυτέρους*) which are among you I exhort ..... feed the flock which is among you, taking the oversight thereof (*ἐπισκοποῦντες*), not by constraint, but willingly," &c. (1 Peter, v. 1, 2.).

This direct evidence is confirmed by indirect. When St. Paul, for example, salutes "the bishops and deacons" of the Philippian church, omitting all mention of the presbyters, the omission, and, as Chrysostom remarks, the fact of their being several "bishops" in one church,† can only be accounted for by the supposition that these *ἐπίσκοποι* were in fact presbyters. And that in the churches to which St. Peter addressed his first epistle there were no eccle-

* The supposition that the *ἐπισκόποι* mentioned in verse 28. were not identical with the *πρεσβυτέροι* of verse 17., but bishops in the strict sense of the word, presiding over the neighbouring churches, resting as it does on the sole opinion of Irenæus, has long been abandoned by the best commentators as untenable. Irenæus and they who adopt his view argue upon the erroneous assumption that *St. Paul* in his address uses both the terms, presbyters and bishops. This is not the case. It is St. Luke, who, at verse 17., speaks of the "elders of the Church;" by which he undoubtedly means the presbytery of the Ephesian church. For the word *ἐκκλησία* in the singular number denotes, in the New Testament, either the mystical body of Christ or a single church; never an aggregate of particular churches. Those whom St. Luke describes as "presbyters," St. Paul afterwards calls "bishops," which names, therefore, signify one and the same office.

†*Σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις· τί τοῦτο; μιᾶς πόλεως πολλοὶ ἐπίσκοποι ἦσαν; οὐδαμῶς ἀλλὰ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους οὕτως ἐκάλεσε.*—Hom. 1. in Ep. ad Phil.

siastical persons superior to presbyters is evident from the passage above cited: — "the elders which are among you I your fellow-elder (ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος) exhort," &c.

There is no difficulty in accounting for this two-fold appellation of the same office. The order of ministers next above that of deacons first appears in connexion with the Church of Jerusalem (Acts, xi. 30.); and in that passage it is designated by the term proper to the office of the Jewish synagogue with which it corresponded, — viz. that of the זְקֵנִים or elders, in Greek, πρεσβύτεροι. This, doubtless, was the original name, and the usual, if not exclusive, one in all the Christian communities of Jewish origin. But in the case of churches composed of those who had been heathens, and to whom Jewish titles and offices were consequently less familiar, while the office was established, another name was given to it, a name which was in general use among the Greeks, and signified any kind of overseer, — viz. ἐπίσκοπος; in accordance with the Apostolic rule of not disturbing old associations, where they did not contravene the essential truths of the Gospel. That this is the true account of the interchange of these words may be inferred from the fact that while the word ἐπίσκοπος, as used to denote the second order of Christian ministers, is not found in the epistles of St. Peter and St. James, who were especially connected with the Jewish converts, it is, on the contrary, very commonly applied to that order by St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, and by his follower, St. Luke.

Nor is there any weight in the remark that *all* the names belonging to the Christian ministry — apostle, presbyter, and deacon — are, in the New Testament, applied in an indiscriminate manner; that St. Peter, as we have seen, calls himself a presbyter, and St. Paul speaks of himself and his fellow Apostles as "ministers" (that is, deacons) of the New Testament; that Timothy is called a deacon, while Epaphroditus bears the name of an Apostle: so that, if, from the interchange of the names ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος, it is to be inferred that they were not distinct offices, we must carry the argument further, and conclude, from the interchange of all the names just mentioned, that there were no distinct offices of apostle, presbyter, and deacon.* This circumstance would doubtless cause some embarrasment, were it not that the offices of deacons and presbyters are repeatedly referred to in Scripture, as *offices*, and irrespectively of individuals; but,

* Manning, Unity, &c., p. 117.

this being the case, the indiscriminate application of the three names produces no real confusion. St. Paul might call himself a deacon, and Epaphroditus an Apostle; but we know that St. Paul did not belong to the order of deacons, and that Epaphroditus was not one of the Apostolic college. Whereas the interchange of the names ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος, as applied not to individuals, but to a class, an order in the Church, would, if those offices were really distinct, be unintelligible except on the supposition that the inspired writers wished to mislead us as to the actual fact. If this be inadmissable, we must conclude that by these names is denoted one and the same ministerial order; which, indeed, is the truth.

It will be urged, however, that, although no order of ministers can be discovered in the New Testament inferior to Apostles, but superior to Presbyters, there yet meet us there certain individuals, not Apostles, and yet manifestly exercising functions superior to those of a simple presbyter. Allowing this to be the fact, we must, however, direct attention to the wide difference that exists, as regards argumentative value, between the institution of an *order* of ministers and individual cases of the kind alluded to. No one would contend that the evidence for the existence in the Apostolic age of the offices of presbyters and deacons would have been so cogent as it is, had Scripture, instead of recording the institution of the offices, merely informed us that a commission had been issued by the Apostles to certain individuals to exercise the functions of a presbyter or deacon. For, in the latter case, the Apostles might not have meant to create a new office, or an office at all; the commission might have been merely personal, or for a temporary purpose; and, therefore, we could not at once infer that in the persons of the individuals so commissioned a new order of ministers was intended to be established. In civil affairs commissions are frequently issued for special purposes, without any intention on the part of the government of creating thereby a permanent office; and when the purposes of the commission are fulfilled, the individuals composing it revert to their former private capacity.

Even, therefore, if there were nothing in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, or in the peculiar relation in which these disciples stood to St. Paul, to create a presumption against their having been, by the commission contained in those epistles, appointed formal bishops of Ephesus and Crete, we should still remember that we have here, not the record of the institution of a new ministerial office, but simply a commission to certain individuals to exercise

powers which afterwards became the special prerogatives of the episcopate. That the position in which Timothy and Titus were thus placed in reference to the presbyters of Ephesus and Crete deserves our serious attention is fully admitted; but it does not seem sufficient, in the absence of any express declaration of the Apostle to that effect, to enable us to pronounce them to have been invested with a new and permanent office.

But this further evidence of the Apostle's intention is not forthcoming. For aught that appears in the epistles to the contrary, the commissions of Timothy and Titus may have been but temporary ones, and intended to meet a special emergency. Two favoured associates of St. Paul are despatched by him to Ephesus and Crete, for the purpose of "setting in order the things that were wanting," correcting certain disorders which had crept in among the Christians of those places, and ordaining elders where they were needed. This is the sum total of the fact with which we have to deal. That the Apostle thereby intended to create in the persons of Timothy and Titus a new office in the Church is not told us. We must even, in candour, admit that it is very improbable that either Timothy or Titus were, *at that time*, permanently invested with the government of the Ephesian or Cretan churches. On a reader, who should succeed in dismissing from his mind the bias produced by the testimony of history, which there is no reason to disbelieve, that Timothy and Titus afterwards became Bishops of Ephesus and Crete respectively, the impression produced by the pastoral epistles would probably be, that in neither case was the commission given to these disciples other than temporary, and for a special purpose. St. Paul and Timothy had been, as we learn from 1 Tim. i. 3., labouring conjointly in the Ephesian church, when the Apostle was compelled to take his departure into Macedonia. In his first epistle to Timothy, he beseeches him to abide at Ephesus, while he (Paul) was absent, in order that the work in which they had both been engaged might not be interrupted. The epistle thus addressed to Timothy would serve as credentials of his commission, and of the authority with which he was invested, in case any "man should despise his youth." He was charged to maintain sound doctrine in opposition to all false teaching; and to see that none but properly qualified persons were selected for the offices of presbyter and deacon. Over these inferior ministers his authority extended; for he was "not to receive an accusation against an elder but before two or three witnesses;" which proves that he exercised some kind of

jurisdiction over elders.* The same remarks apply to the case of Titus. He, like Timothy, had been a fellow-labourer of St. Paul in Crete; and when the Apostle, from causes unknown to us, was compelled to quit the island before the organization of its Christian societies had been completed, Titus was left behind with a charge in all respects similar to that given to Timothy:—"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."† Now there is no question but that Timothy and Titus here appear as the representatives of St. Paul himself: the Apostolic power was delegated to them for the time being: they claimed the obedience of the Ephesian and Cretan presbyters in the name of St. Paul. Not only, however, is there no positive evidence in all this that St. Paul intended to create in the persons of Timothy and Titus a new ecclesiastical office, but there appear to be, in the epistles themselves, express intimations that their commission was but a temporary one; that it was to terminate either when St. Paul should rejoin them, or should direct them to go elsewhere. Such, at least, is the impression conveyed by such passages as the following:—"These things write I unto thee, hoping to *come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry,* that thou mightest know how to behave thyself in the house of God," &c.; *"Till I come,* give attendance to reading," &c.‡ The Apostle, apparently, was not able to fulfil his intention of rejoining them; and accordingly, adopting the other alternative, he urges both Timothy (in the 2nd epistle) and Titus to despatch as quickly as possible what remained to be done, and to repair, the former to Rome, the latter to Nicopolis: "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me; for Demas .... is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia; Titus to Dalmatia:" "When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis."§ From the former of these passages we incidentally gather that Titus's stay in Crete was, in fact, but short; for the second epistle to Timothy having been written either a little after or at the same time as that to Titus, it should seem that the latter had, according to the Apostle's direction, joined him where he was residing, and by him

* In the passage in 1 Tim. v. 1.—"Rebuke not an elder," &c.—usually cited to prove that Timothy was invested with disciplinary authority over presbyters, the word "elder" most probably means, not an ecclesiastical officer, but any elderly person, for it is opposed to the "younger men" who are mentioned immediately afterwards, by whom clearly are meant the younger members of the society in general.

† Tit. i. 5.

‡ 1 Tim. iii. 14, 15.; iv. 13.

§ 2 Tim. iv. 9, 10.; Tit. iii. 12.

had been despatched on another mission,—viz. to Dalmatia. With respect to this second epistle to Timothy, written, according to the most probable hypothesis, about a year after the first, and in the immediate prospect of martyrdom, it is to be observed that there is no mention whatever in it of Timothy's being permanent bishop of Ephesus, or, indeed, of his being in any way connected with that church. That he was at Ephesus when the epistle was addressed to him, we gather only from the probabilities of the case, and from the mention of Hymenæus and Alexander (c. ii. 17., iv. 14.), who seem to be the same persons against whom Timothy is warned in the first epistle (c. i. 20.).

This evidence of the temporary nature of the commissions of Timothy and Titus, furnished by the epistles themselves, would perhaps be by itself not very conclusive; but it receives a strong confirmation from the peculiar relation in which these apostolical men stood to St. Paul, a relation which renders it most improbable that they exercised, during the Apostle's lifetime, any fixed episcopal functions. In fact, Timothy and Titus belonged to a class of persons occupying a conspicuous place in St. Paul's epistles, who may be called Apostolic delegates, or commissioners; who, from the resemblance which their functions bore in some particulars to those of a bishop, and probably from the fact that the first bishops were chosen from their number, were by a later age easily mistaken for formal bishops. The origin of these Apostolic delegates is easily explained. As the field of St. Paul's missionary labours extended itself, and the number of churches standing in a peculiar relation towards him as their founder increased, it became more and more difficult for him to carry on the oversight of these churches in person. The only method of supplying his unavoidable absences, was to do through others what he could not do in propriâ personâ. Accordingly, he seems, at an early period of his ministry, to have selected from the general body of believers certain persons, eminent for their natural and spiritual endowments, whom he attached to his person, and some of whom commonly accompanied him in his journeys. As soon as they had, by familiar and constant intercourse with the Apostle, become fully imbued with his sentiments, and had proved themselves fit to be entrusted with authority, they were by him despatched to different parts of the Christian world, or that portion of it which St. Paul claimed as his own peculiar sphere of labour, as need seemed to require. Sometimes they were sent to check one or more of the many heretical tendencies which even in that early age had begun to manifest

themselves; sometimes to correct practical abuses, or to assist in organizing a Christian society. Wherever they appeared, they were understood to come clothed with St. Paul's authority, empowered by Him to supply what was wanting, to "reprove, rebuke and exhort with all authority and doctrine." But (and herein lay the peculiarity of their office) they, like the Apostles themselves, were never permanently fixed in any one place. As soon as they had finished the business upon which they had been sent to any particular church, they returned to the Apostle, who either retained them in attendance upon himself, or sent them forth on a mission to some other church needing their supervision. St. Paul in his epistles generally appears attended by one or more of these Apostolic delegates; and, by a comparison of those compositions, we can ascertain, with a high degree of probability, many of their names. Thus the names associated with St. Paul's own in the introductory salutations of his epistles — among which we find Silvanus, Sosthenes, and, more frequently than any other, Timothy — were doubtless those of persons belonging to this class. The following passages contain the names of several of these Apostolic commissioners, and also explain the nature of their office: — "Timotheus my work-fellow, and Lucius, &c., salute you." * "If Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, *even as I do.*" † "God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus, when he told us your earnest desire, &c., towards me:" "And his" (Titus) "inward affection is more abundant towards you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him." ‡ "We have sent with him (Titus) the brother whose praise is in all the churches." § "We have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things. Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you: or our brethren be inquired of, they are the messengers (*ἀπόστολοι*) of the churches." ‖ "Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother." ¶ "That ye may also know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known unto you all things: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose." ** "I

* Rom. xvi. 21.
‡ 2 Cor. vii. vv. 6—15.
‖ Ibid. viii. 22, 23.
** Ephes. vi. 21.

† 1 Cor. xvi. 10. See v. 11.
§ Ibid. viii. 18.
¶ Ibid. xii. 17, 18.

supposed it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger (ἀπόστολον), and he that ministered to my wants."* "Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom ye have received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him."† "We thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus, our brother, &c., to establish you, and comfort you concerning your faith."‡ "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus."§ "When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me."‖ "There salute you Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-labourers."¶

It is to this class of Apostolic delegates that Timothy and Titus, as we see from the frequent mention of their names, belonged; both, but especially the former, being among the most confidential and eminent of those whom St. Paul thus employed. This being so, it is, obviously, very unlikely that the Apostle would, in his lifetime, have attached them permanently to any particular church. A consideration which, coupled with the plain statements of the pastoral epistles, may well lead us to conclude that the position of Timothy at Ephesus and of Titus in Crete was not, at that time, a formal episcopate.

These two cases are those upon which the Scriptural evidence for episcopacy mainly rests, for to the others which have been adduced so much uncertainty confessedly attaches that but little stress can be laid upon them. Thus that St. James, the brother of our Lord, exercised some kind of presidency, and that a permanent one, in the Church of Jerusalem is manifest from the way in which he is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles; but what the nature of it was, and whether it was official, or simply personal, is not told us. History, indeed, informs us that he became bishop of Jerusalem, and its testimony on this point may be accepted; but what we are now concerned with is the evidence for episcopacy which Scripture by itself furnishes. As regards the Apocalyptic angels, the character of the book in general, and the evidently metaphorical titles which they bear, prevent us from

* Phil. ii. 25.
† Col. iv. 10.
‡ 1 Thess. iii. 1, 2.
§ 1 Tim. iv. 11, 12.
‖ Tit. iii. 12.
¶ Philem. 23, 24.

drawing any certain conclusions concerning them.* Diotrephes, indeed, mentioned by St. John, 3d Epist. 9., was a real person; but whether the influence by which he was enabled to withstand the Apostle's authority was derived from his official position as bishop of the Church, or whether he was merely an ambitious and arrogant presbyter, we know not. It is possible that both the "angels" of the Apocalyptic Churches and Diotrephes were formal bishops, for no reasonable doubt can be entertained that, if the date commonly assigned to the Apocalypse — viz. A. D. 95 or 96 — be correct, episcopacy was, when that book was written, generally, if not universally, established; but whence the "angels" or Diotrephes, if bishops, derived their commission, by whom they were appointed to preside over their respective churches; in short, respecting the origin of the episcopal order; upon this, the essential point in the present argument, Scripture leaves us very much in the dark.

Such is the real amount of proof which Scripture alone furnishes for the apostolicity of the episcopal regimen; how scanty and insufficient it is needs not to be pointed out. The reader will now be able to judge how far the actual facts of the case bear out the assertion that episcopacy is matter of divine prescription; a law of God, as essential to the being of a Church as the Aaronic priesthood was to the integrity of the Levitical ritual; so essential that Cyprian could say, "Scire debes episcopum in ecclesiâ esse et ecclesiam in episcopo, et si quis cum episcopo non sit, in ecclesiâ non esse."† The truth is, that, while none of the three orders is traceable to a directly divine institution, of the three, episcopacy is the one, the very apostolicity of which is the most difficult of establishment by the unaided evidence of Scripture: for while it is clearly recorded that the Apostles instituted the orders of presbyters and deacons, it is not so clearly recorded (indeed it is not recorded at all) that they instituted the order of bishops. It certainly is a

* If Augustin's authority is to decide the question, the Apocalyptic angels are to be regarded, not as individuals, but as personifications of the churches themselves; — "laudatur angelus ecclesiæ quæ est Ephesi (quem nemo recte intelligens dubitat ipsius ecclesiæ gestare personam)" &c. — Post Coll. Lib. s. 37. Stillingfleet's remarks upon the passage are well worthy of attention. "If many things in the epistles be directed to the angels, but yet so as to concern the whole body, then, of necessity, the angel must be taken as a representative of the whole body; and then, why may not the word 'angel' be taken by way of representation of the body itself, either of the whole Church, or, which is far more probable, of the concessors or order of presbyters in that church? *We see what miserable unaccountable arguments those are which are brought for any kind of government from metaphorical or ambiguous expressions, or names promiscuously used.*" — Irenicum, part 2. c. 6.

† Epist. 69. Ad Florent.

curious, but highly characteristic, fact that that particular order of the ministry which the Church system pronounces to be the most divine and the most essential should rest upon Scriptural proof, to say the least, obscure and ambiguous as compared with that which can be adduced for the two inferior orders. For if the "angels" of the Apocalypse, and Diotrephes, were not of this order, the foregoing considerations make it more than probable that the New Testament does not present us with any instance of a formal bishop.

Nevertheless the cases of Timothy and Titus, if they fail in establishing the apostolicity of episcopacy, are not without their value, as against the opponents of that form of Church government. Like the positions of the Apostles after the institution of presbyters and deacons, that of Timothy at Ephesus and of Titus at Crete is a significant fact to which the candid reader of Scripture, mindful of the manner in which the New Testament propounds apostolic precedents to our imitation, will not fail to give due weight. What these cases really appear to establish is, the general, but important, principle, or rather principles, that an imparity of Christian ministers is not only allowable, but Scriptural; and that, according to the mind of St. Paul, the general superintendence or government of an ecclesiastical district, including churches with their presbyters and deacons, is best committed to a single person. For if no strong reasons exist for the contrary supposition, it is to be presumed that what was best for the Ephesian church for a time (Timothy's mission thither being supposed to be only a temporary one) would have been also best for it permanently; and that form of government which was best for the church of Ephesus or of Crete would, it may equally be presumed, have been the best for every church then existing, and, by parity of reasoning, for every church now in existence. Thus, no doubt, the cases alluded to furnish a hint — an apostolic precedent — upon which episcopacy may be made to rest: they serve to rebut the allegation that that form of polity is intrinsically unscriptural: but beyond this it does not appear that they can be safely urged.

To the establishment of episcopacy proper there cannot, with any show of probability, be assigned an earlier date than A. D. 70, which is later than the latest of St. Paul's writings. Every thing conspires to induce the belief that the Church did not possess formal bishops until after the destruction of Jerusalem. In the first place, if bishops really are successors of the Apostles, is it likely that St. Paul would have appointed persons to take his

place while he was yet alive and actively engaged in the oversight of the churches? It is conceivable, indeed, that he may have *designated* certain persons to occupy the post of chief pastor in each considerable church as soon as death should have removed him from his ministerial labours upon earth; but that he would actually instal them in their offices, while he himself held in his own hands the reins of government, is not at all probable. It should seem, therefore, that they who lay such stress upon the cases of Timothy and Titus find themselves on the horns of the following dilemma: If Timothy and Titus, when St. Paul addressed his epistles to them, were formal bishops, bishops are not successors of the Apostles, for the Apostle Paul had not, at that time, either abdicated his apostolic functions, or been removed from earth: if, on the other hand, it is essential to the idea of a bishop that he succeed to the place of the Apostles, Timothy and Titus could not, at the time of which we are speaking, have been formal bishops. But another, and a stronger argument, in favour of the date just mentioned, is derivable from the nature of the episcopate, as compared with the two inferior orders of the ministry. It has been already remarked that, while presbyters and deacons are clearly traceable to the synagogue, we cannot discover in that institution the prototype of a Christian bishop, whose office, therefore, seems to have been the peculiar and independent offspring of Christianity: in giving episcopacy to the Church the Apostles appear to have acted, for the first time, irrespectively of any Jewish precedent. In short, it was in becoming episcopal that the Church first became conscious of her independence of Judaism, and proclaimed to the world that, whatever might become of the forms of the elder dispensation, she had within herself her own peculiar organization, and could thenceforward advance alone. Now if we bear in mind the extreme reluctance which the Apostles, even St. Paul himself, exhibited to commit themselves to any act which might seem forcibly to sever the connexion between the church and the temple, we shall see how probable it is that, while the temple stood, the synagogical polity of presbyters and deacons was all that the Church possessed. Christianity was the offspring of genuine—*i. e.* spiritual—Judaism; and, the Mosaic polity with the temple services being of express divine appointment, the Apostles, themselves Jews, would naturally feel reluctant, in the absence of any intimation from heaven that the Jewish institutions were abrogated, to take decisive steps to make the church and the synagogue two visibly dis-

tinct bodies. The Jewish Christians universally regarded the temple with something of the same feeling which their unbelieving brethren of the synagogue cherished towards it: they looked upon it as still their own,—as the visible symbol and proof of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob being still their God in a sense in which He was not the God of other nations. As forming Christian synagogues, modelled after the Jewish institution, they felt or conceived themselves to be still under the shadow of the ancient vine; a fond notion which, unfounded as it was, as long as it did not infringe any of the essential doctrines of the Gospel, the Apostles, we may be sure, would not rudely disturb. The dissolution of the Jewish polity, and temple services, however, produced a total alteration in the existing state of things, and for ever dissipated the hopes which it is probable many of the Christians of Palestine cherished, of seeing Judaism and Christianity combined into one system. By that great event God declared with a voice which could not be mistaken that the elder dispensation, having fulfilled its purpose, was at an end, and that thenceforward the Church of Christ—the true Israel of which the former had been but the type—was to pursue her own independent course. Every tie which bound the Christians of Jewish origin to the Mosaic institutions was now snapt asunder; and, consequently, they were ready to receive whatever further enlargement of the Church's polity the circumstances of the times might seem to call for, even though the new institution should have no counterpart in the ancient economy. That about the period named—viz. A. D. 70—the circumstances of the Church did imperatively call for an extension of its polity will hereafter be shown. There is every reason to believe, therefore, that during the lifetime of the great Apostle of the Gentiles the Church had no formal bishops; that this new feature of Church polity emerged into view subsequently to the destruction of Jerusalem; and that it emanated from those of the Apostles who survived that event.

3. For however difficult it may be to establish, from Scripture alone, the apostolicity of episcopacy, we yet have the strongest grounds for believing it to be an apostolical institution. But the weight of the evidence rests upon uninspired testimony; or rather upon that testimony combined with the precedents furnished by Scripture. By the aid of history and Scripture combined, it may be satisfactorily made out that Apostles either instituted or sanctioned the episcopal form of Church government.

There is no reason whatever why, in a matter of fact of this kind,

we should refuse to listen to the voice of antiquity. There can be little doubt that the Apostles gave, on many points of order, directions which have not reached us through the medium of Scripture; just as our Lord, according to the testimony of St. John, did many things, the record of which the Gospels do not contain. Both in the one case and in the other, it is but a *selection* which, in Scripture, the Holy Ghost has thought fit to give to the Church: it is only, therefore, what might have been expected, it may even have been designedly so ordered, that several of the apostolic regulations should come down to us by the channel of uninspired Church history; the testimony of which, if there is no reason to suspect it, is to be received like that of profane history in an analogous case. There is, no doubt, a wide difference, as regards binding authority, between those of the apostolic appointments which are recorded in Scripture and those the proof of which rests upon uninspired testimony. As regards the former, we are absolutely certain of the fact, inasmuch as we have it from the immediate followers of the Apostles, and from persons supernaturally preserved from error; whereas, in the latter case, we depend upon the testimony of those who, for the most part, only transmit to us what they themselves had received from others, and who, being uninspired, were liable to human error and imperfection. When Ignatius, or Clement, tells us that such and such practices or institutions proceeded from the Apostles, or that they heard so from others, there is no primâ facie reason why we should not give credence to their testimony; but, inasmuch as we tread upon uninspired ground, we are compelled to be more circumspect in dealing with the evidence, and, above all, to consider carefully whether the alleged apostolical ordinance accords, in its spirit, with the undoubted principles of apostolical polity recorded in Holy Scripture. For to admit, without limitation, Augustin's maxim, that, whatever is universally prevalent in the Church, must, for this sole reason, be ascribed to the Apostles, is to open a wide door to abuse; stamping, as it does, with apostolic sanction, every superstitious and unscriptural practice which can plead in its behalf antiquity and universality.* If the practice or institution in question is manifestly opposed to the spirit of the apostolic regulations as set forth in Scripture, we may be sure, however ancient it may profess to be, that it is not apostolic; in other words, that it has not really existed from the first.

* "Sunt multa quæ universa tenet ecclesia, et ob hoc ab apostolis præcepta bene creduntur, quanquam scripta non reperiantur."—De Bap. cont. Don. l. v. s. 31.

Furthermore, the appointments of the Apostles, which are actually recorded in Scripture, derive, from that very fact, an importance which does not belong to those which we gather from uninspired testimony, however unexceptionable that testimony may be. We may have equally strong grounds for believing that any two appointments are of apostolic origin; and yet if one rests upon the testimony of Scripture, while the other has been handed down to us by uninspired history, they can by no means be placed in the same category: the difference in the medium of proof making a difference between them, not as regards the fact, but as regards their binding force. This follows from the peculiar place which Scripture holds in the Church of Christ. Scripture contains that portion of the apostolical teaching, and the apostolical appointments, which is necessary either to the being or the well-being of the Church: it is the gift of God to His people, comprehending all the essential principles of Christianity, and belonging, like the Apostles, its authors, to the universal Church of every age; on which account its omissions are as significant as its contents. An apostolical appointment, therefore, which is found recorded in Scripture may be presumed to be of permanent use, and to possess a binding force, not so much because it is apostolic, for this another ordinance not found in Scripture may equally be, as because it is recorded in Scripture, because it forms part of that divinely superintended selection of the apostolic practices which we possess in the inspired Word. The apostolicity of each may be equally undoubted: it is the vehicle of transmission that makes the difference. The application of this principle admits of degrees. Appointments which are so distinctly stated in Scripture to have proceeded from the Apostles as to need no confirmation of testimony from other quarters, must be considered as more necessary to the Church than those which require extra-Scriptural evidence to establish their claims; for we must believe that even the *proportions* in which Scripture unfolds divine truth, the *relative distinctness* with which it records the facts of early church history, are the result of that divine wisdom which presided over its composition. On this ground, it should seem that presbyters and deacons, if a comparison is to be instituted between the three orders, are more essential to the Church than bishops, inasmuch as Scripture records the apostolic institution of the former more distinctly than it does that of the latter.

With these limitations, the testimony of the early Church to the apostolicity of a then existing practice may be admitted as readily as any other human testimony to a matter of fact. In the

particular case with which we are now concerned, this testimony is as cogent as can well be conceived. It is not merely that the Fathers unanimously ascribe the institution of episcopacy to the Apostles; the moment we pass out of Scripture into the field of uninspired history we are met by the fact of the universal prevalence of that form of church government, a fact which can only be satisfactorily accounted for by the supposition of its having proceeded from the Apostles. The evidence, it has been seen, will not permit us to assign to episcopacy proper an earlier date than A. D. 70, or some period subsequent to St. Paul's martyrdom; and yet it is evident from the epistles of Ignatius (A. D. 107, or, according to others, A. D. 116) that in his time the episcopal polity had become firmly and universally established: how improbable it is that, unsupported by apostolic institution, it would have prevailed so speedily and universally needs not to be pointed out. But this is not all. In the early ecclesiastical historians the succession of bishops in most of the considerable churches is traced up to the very times of the Apostles; traditions the authenticity of which there is no reason, except in those particular points in which they seem to clash with the facts of Scripture, to call in question. Thus we are told that St. Paul appointed Timothy bishop of Ephesus, and Titus bishop of Crete:* it is not, indeed, for the reasons previously given, likely that the Apostle himself conferred the episcopal office upon them; but nothing is more probable than that, when episcopacy was introduced, Timothy and Titus were fixed as formal bishops in the churches in which they had already exercised quasi-episcopal functions. The same is very likely to have been the case with Linus and others, whose names occur in the New Testament, and whom history records to have been the first bishops of their respective sees. From among the immediate companions of the Apostles the first bishops would naturally be chosen.

The reasons why we retain episcopacy may be briefly summed up as follows when we open the ecclesiastical remains, — say of the 4th century, — we find no other form of polity anywhere existing, whether in the Catholic Church, or in the bodies dissident therefrom. The same fact meets us in every preceding century, up to a period when one at least of the Apostles, — St. John,

* Not, however, by the accurate Eusebius, who merely records the tradition that they were the first bishops of Ephesus and Crete, without mentioning from whom they derived their appointments. Τιμόθεός γε μὴν τῆς ἐν Ἐφέσῳ παροικίας ἱστορεῖται πρῶτος τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν εἰληχέναι· ὡς καὶ Τίτος τῶν ἐπὶ Κρήτης ἐκκλησιῶν. — Lib. iii. c. 4.

—must have been surviving. We find the Christian writers of each age unanimous in assigning to that form of church polity an apostolical origin. At length we come to Scripture itself. Here, indeed, it seems difficult to discover a formal episcopate; nevertheless we find presbyters and deacons, and the Apostles over both: we find St. Paul delegating to individuals a portion of his apostolical authority, the functions which they were to exercise closely resembling those which formal bishops afterwards exercised. If the Apocalyptic angels are to be considered as individuals in ecclesiastical office, we may fairly infer, from the mention of them, that, at that time, each church was presided over by one chief pastor. So far, then, from there being anything in the episcopal regimen which, from its disagreement with Scriptural precedent, might lead us to hesitate in giving credence to the witness of tradition affirming it to be of apostolical institution, there are positive data in Scripture which, if not conclusive on that point, are yet sufficient to warrant us in saying that it is agreeable to the mind of the Apostles. Thus, no antecedent objection standing in the way, full scope is left to the force of the uninspired testimony which, under such circumstances, becomes irresistible. No reasonable doubt can be entertained that episcopacy proper took its rise at some period between A. D. 70 and A. D. 100; and as little that it was either established or sanctioned by the Apostles then living, especially the survivor of the whole body,—St. John,—whose residence in Asia Minor, where tradition fixes the beginnings of the episcopate, points him out as in all probability that one of the twelve to whom the Church owes this extension of her polity, the only one, beyond presbyters and deacons, which can make any pretence to an apostolical origin.

As long as the advocates for episcopacy are content to rest their cause upon post-apostolic testimony, their position is impregnable: it is only when they attempt to prove it from Scripture alone that the argument fails to convince. Better at once to acknowledge that the institution is traceable to the Apostles chiefly through the channel of uninspired history than, by insisting upon insufficient Scriptural evidence, to bring discredit upon the whole argument, as an injudicious advocate, by undertaking to prove too much, often damages a really strong cause. True it is that, in making such an acknowledgment, episcopalians abandon the high ground of a divine law, perpetually binding; but they only abandon what is untenable, while the argument for the retention of the episcopal polity remains unaffected. For it does not follow that

because we cannot pronounce this polity to be essential to the Church, and are even compelled to prove its apostolicity by extra-Scriptural evidence, we are therefore at liberty to reject it. Every institution which we have reason to regard as an apostolical one, by whatever road we may have arrived at that conclusion, comes to us with a *primâ facie* claim upon our acceptance, and may not be lightly rejected. "It is clear that the whole argument should be confined to the Scriptures;" so writes a recent opponent of episcopacy,* availing himself of the concession of his antagonist, bishop Onderdonk, that, "the claim of episcopacy to be of divine origin, and therefore obligatory upon the Church, rests fundamentally on the one question, Has it the authority of Scripture? If it has not, it is not necessarily binding." We shall hereafter examine whether, even if it had the express authority of Scripture, the inference could be at once drawn that it is immutably binding upon the Church; meanwhile it may be observed that no episcopalian who understands the strength of his own position will concede that, when the question is not concerning the perpetual obligation of episcopacy as a divinely prescribed polity, but concerning its apostolicity, the argument is to be confined to Scripture alone. Nothing can be more irrational than entirely to disconnect ourselves from the early Church, as if in each successive age Christianity had to be begun *de novo;* or as if there were no other evidence of apostolic practices but that which is derivable from Scripture, and no medium between affirming an institution to be necessarily binding, and rejecting it. The indispensable part which the testimony of the early Church bears in authenticating Scripture itself, proves that it never was the Divine intention that, annihilating the intervening centuries between ourselves and the Apostles, we should confine our attention solely to Scripture, and reject as worthless whatever cannot be found there recorded: only let us bear in mind that the moment we pass beyond the inspired Word, we pass from the region of what is divine and essential to the lower ground of what is, or is not, as the case may be, probably apostolical. By descending from the higher, and, as it should seem, untenable ground of a divine prescription to this lower one, the episcopalian gains immensely in the real strength of his argument; and as long as he is content with maintaining that episcopacy is an apostolical institution, and therefore to be retained by churches which would follow the apostolical model, it will be impossible to dislodge him from his position.

* Barnes' Apostolic Church, p. 10.

Nor is it a fair statement which the same writer makes that "it is a point of essential importance in this controversy, that the burden of proof lies on the friends of episcopacy;" unless, indeed, by the "friends of episcopacy" be meant those who put forth claims respecting it which virtually consign all non-episcopal churches to the uncovenanted mercies of God. Here, again, moderation is strength. If we are content to take the lower ground, and to maintain that episcopacy is to be retained because, though not expressly recorded in Scripture, the apostolicity of its origin may be otherwise established, the burden of proof is unquestionably thrown upon the opponent. We retain episcopacy because it has been handed down to us, without a break, from the times of the Apostles: the presumption that we are right in doing so is entirely with us: we are in possession of the field: and he who would introduce another form of polity must be prepared to prove that episcopacy is intrinsically, and without reference to the abuses to which, in common with all forms of church government, it is liable, unscriptural.

But we have not yet fully mastered the subject in all its bearings. Let it be supposed that it had been distinctly recorded in Scripture that episcopacy, like the presbyterate and diaconate, proceeded from the Apostles; could we, even then, at once infer that it is of divine institution, and a matter of perpetual obligation? Or, to put the same question under a more general form, is every appointment which can be proved from Scripture to have emanated from the Apostles to be *ipso facto* deemed a divine law? So much depends upon our entertaining just views respecting the nature of the Apostolic appointments, and so illustrative of the spirit of Christianity is the mode in which those appointments have been transmitted to us in Scripture, that it is worth our while to consider this point more attentively.

Every one acquainted with our elder apologists for episcopacy will have observed that when they have, as they conceive, proved from Scripture that the Apostles instituted that form of church polity, they take for granted that they have proved it to be of divine original, and of perpetual obligation.* Nor is this mode

* *E. g.* Bishop Hall indites a treatise which he calls "Episcopacy by Divine Right;" but all that he really proves is that it is apostolical. So bishop Taylor. In a subsequent work, however, on the same subject, bishop Hall does seem to recognise the distinction between a divine law and an apostolical institution: — "Let me beseech the reader to consider seriously of this difference, in the mistaking of which I have not a little unjustly suffered: and to remember how I have expressed it in my 'Remonstrance,' fetching the pedigree of episcopacy from apostolical (and therefore in that right, divine) institution, and interpreting

of arguing confined to episcopalians. The presbyterians of former times, if not of the present, contended, on precisely the same ground, for the divine right of the presbyterial polity. It has been already intimated that the point tacitly assumed by both parties requires proof; and a more accurate examination of the subject may, perhaps, lead us to the conclusion that even those of the apostolic appointments which are distinctly recorded in Scripture are by no means to be necessarily regarded as divine laws.

It must be granted, indeed, that the apostolical institutions which Scripture records come to us with a strong presumption in favour of their perpetual use; not so much, as has been already observed, because they are certainly known to be apostolic, as because they form part of the contents of Scripture. He would be a bold man who should maintain that it is a matter of indifference whether or not we adhere in regulations of polity to Scriptural precedent. Nevertheless the remarkable circumstance is to be borne in mind, that not one of the appointments of the Apostles in matters of polity have been transmitted to us in Scripture in the form of *legislative enactments*, but simply as *recorded facts*. For example, the inspired history informs us that, as a matter of fact, the Apostles ordained elders for every church; but no *law* upon the subject, purporting to emanate from the Apostles, can be found in Scripture. To their appointments the Apostles append no imperative declarations, making them immutably binding upon the Church. Let their mode of proceeding in this respect be compared with the mode in which the law of Moses was delivered, and the difference between the two cases will be apparent. The Mosaic appointments were not only recorded, but commanded; the apostolic regulations are recorded, but not made matter of law: the Apostles do not absolutely bind the Church of every age to follow the precedents which they set. When we consider the natural tendency in the promulgators of a new religion to pursue an opposite course, we can only account for the mode of proceeding adopted by the Apostles by the supposition of their being under a divine guidance, which withheld them from what might have

myself not to understand by 'divine right' any express law of God requiring it upon the absolute necessity of the being of a Church, but an institution of Apostles, inspired by the Holy Ghost, warranting it where it is, and requiring it where it may be had."—Defence of the Humble Remonstrance, sect. 6. It is a pity that the good bishop did not, to prevent misconception, explain in his former treatise what he meant by "episcopacy by divine right;" for it should seem that whatever is really jure divino must be of the nature of a divine law.

given occasion to the notion that the essential being of the Church lies in the polity, which, under apostolic guidance, she assumed.*

It may be urged, in extenuation of this argument, that the Apostles have no more attached a perpetual sanction, or character of immutability, to the *doctrines* which they preached, than to the appointments which they made; consequently if, on this ground, we withhold from the latter the character of divine enactments, we must also suppose the former to be not intrinsically immutable. But the important distinction between a doctrine and an enactment must ever be borne in mind. A doctrine once revealed is, from the nature of the case, eternally true and unalterable; but a mere positive appointment, being in itself indifferent, requires an expression of the will of the lawgiver to make it unalterably binding. For example, the doctrine of the Unity of God, declared by Moses, became at once an article of faith essential and immutable; being always true it is always necessary; but the institution of the passover, being a mere positive appointment, needed a law to be attached to it to make it perpetually binding upon the Jews, and such a law was actually promulgated. In like manner when the Apostles declared that Christ is God, or that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law, these statements, being doctrines, carried with them their own eternal and immutable sanction: not so, the institutions of the presbyterate and diaconate; for there is no absurdity in conceiving that some other polity differing in form might have been given to the Church. Appointments of this kind, if they are to be of perpetual obligation, need, like those of the Mosaic economy, a declaration to that effect; which since the Apostles have not appended to their own institutions, we gather that the latter, though by no means alterable at the caprice of subsequent generations, were not intended to have the force of divine laws, or to be absolutely immutable.

It is worthy of remark that not only were all the great doctrines of Christianity enunciated by Christ himself, the Apostles being but divinely guided expositors of what their Lord had previously delivered, but that the only two ordinances which symbolize cardinal doctrines of the Gospel, and directly concern the Christian's communion with God — viz. the two sacraments — were likewise

* The reader who wishes to see how *uninspired* apostles, if the expression may be allowed, would have proceeded in matters of polity, will do well to consult the spurious Apostolical Canons and Constitutions. The subject-matter of these compositions being put out of view, let him mark the *form* in which they are cast, — which is that of legislative enactment, not, as in Scripture, of historical precedent.

of Christ's own institution. Whatever relates to the Church, viewed as the mystical body of Christ, — *i. e.* in its essential, eternal, and immutable character, — was not left even to the inspired Apostles to declare or establish: the only sphere of agency in which they appear as really independent originators is in the affairs of the Church, considered in its earthly and temporary aspect, — in the settlement and organization of Christian societies, and regulations of order. And yet, though from their nature and import we should antecedently be led to infer that the sacraments are of perpetual obligation, it is remarkable that they are also *declared* to be so; the original terms of the institution of baptism plainly implying that it is to be practised "even unto the end of the world," and the design of the Lord's Supper being declared to be "to show forth the Lord's death till He come."

Nor should it be forgotten that several of the apostolic regulations, even of those most distinctly recorded in Scripture, have been, by the general consent of the Church, abandoned as no longer suitable to altered circumstances; while others have been modified. The most striking instance of this is the well-known decree of the first apostolic council at Jerusalem respecting the obligation of the Gentile converts to abstain from things strangled and from blood.* Nothing was wanting to give solemnity to the publication of this decree. It proceeded not from one Apostle merely, but from several in Council; and the Holy Ghost Himself is declared to be its author. Yet, by the application of certain general principles laid down in St. Paul's epistles,† this decree has been long since set aside — by the Western Church at least — as no longer binding. In like manner, the apostolic practices of anointing the sick with oil, the kiss of charity, and the primitive love-feasts,‡ have been either abandoned or modified. An instance of an order of ministers, undoubtedly apostolic, yet no longer formally existing in the Church, is that of the "deaconesses," of whom mention is made in St. Paul's epistles. May we not suppose that instances like these have been recorded for the very purpose of teaching us that apostolical appointments, even those the record of which is embalmed in Scripture, are not intrinsically unalterable, and may either be modified, or altogether laid aside, when a change of circumstances renders them no longer necessary or salutary?

* Acts, xv.

† Rom. xiv.; 1 Cor. viii.; Col. ii. 16–23.

‡ Jas. v. 14; 1 Cor. xvi. 20.; Jud. xii.

The view which a modern writer takes of this subject will probably commend itself to the judgment of most readers — viz. that the apostolic appointments, being those of inspired men, must have been the very best for those times, the best under then existing circumstances; and differ herein from the regulations of uninspired men, which may, or may not, be the best for the time being.* As long, therefore, as the circumstances which gave rise to the Apostolic appointments remain the same, those appointments are to be adhered to; what was best for the Apostolic age will, circumstances remaining the same, be best now. But it is conceivable that changes may take place in the social or political world such as to render the original ordinances of the Apostles inapplicable, or even unsuitable, to the altered state of things; and if such a case should arise, these ordinances not being declared to be of the nature of a divine law, the letter must give place to the spirit, and the Church may lawfully exercise, in modifying existing practices, or introducing new ones, a power of discretion which the Apostles themselves would doubtless, under similar circumstances, have exercised. For "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" and he who had learned "unto the Jews to become as a Jew," "to them that" were "without law as without law," "to the weak as weak," and "all things to all men that" he "might by all means save some,"† would, we may be sure, have had no scruple, did sufficient reason appear for so doing, in varying his own appointments so as to meet the exigencies of the age.

An illustration bearing upon this subject may be drawn from the epistles of the Apostle just mentioned. In 1 Cor. vii., he discusses the question whether it is better for Christians to marry or to remain unmarried; and decides, where there is no natural hindrance, in favour of the latter state of life. But throughout the discussion he takes care to caution his readers against mistaking what was a judgment, "good for the present distress," for a divine law, perpetually binding, and binding every individual. The judgment was an apostolic one, given under the guidance of the Spirit of God (ver. 25. 40.), and, therefore, in itself the best for the existing circumstances of the Church: but it was accompanied with two important limitations. The first, that, even under the existing circumstances, no yoke was thereby meant to be imposed upon individuals, so that if any one notwithstanding the Apostle's

* Hinds, "History of Christianity" &c. part 3. c. 2.
† 1 Cor. ix. 20, 21.

judgment, should marry, he did not sin (ver. 28.): the second, that, under a different state of things, the rule itself might not hold good; for this is plainly implied in the observation, that his counsel was "good for the present necessity." That St. Paul's rule respecting marriage was, in the case of those who could receive it, the best for that particular time we must believe, if we believe in the plenary inspiration of Scripture; and therefore we must believe that (with the same limitation as regards individuals) it is the best for every similar conjuncture of circumstances, to the end of time: but the possibility of its becoming inapplicable is plainly intimated by the Apostle himself, and, under the ordinary circumstances of the Church, it does seem to be inapplicable.

St. Paul's judgment on this point appears to supply the principle upon which all the Apostolic appointments, including those relating to the ministry, were made, and the light in which they are to be regarded. As proceeding from inspired Apostles, they were the best for the Church of that age, and, until the contrary be clearly proved, must be presumed to be the best for every age: he who would innovate upon them must be prepared to show that the circumstances of the Church are such as to render them no longer applicable. In some instances, as we have seen, the Church has availed herself of the discretion allowed her; in others the necessity of a change has never as yet been made evident. There never has been a time in which the apostolic orders of the ministry were not as necessary as they were in the Apostles' times; nor is it easy to conceive that such a time can ever arrive. They have ever remained, and doubtless ever will remain, in the Church. But they have not been imposed as divine laws, nor has the covenanted grace of Christ been inseparably, or at all, connected with them; consequently, to deviate from them, and thus needlessly to break the chain which connects us with the apostolic age, may indeed be a sin, greater or less according to circumstances, but it is not the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. There is nothing in this peculiarity of the New Testament institutions which is not perfectly consistent with the view already taken of the fundamental differences between the law and the Gospel. If Christianity be primarily a life of faith in Christ, and the Church of Christ have her true being in that internal life, it is only what we should have expected that as regards external regulations of polity, even those of Apostles, she would be left *comparatively* unfettered. Thus is the Gospel fitted to win its way in every variety of race and climate; invariable in essentials, but admitting of variation in

subordinate matters; ever holding to the same general principles even in polity, but permitting different exemplifications of them; like its Divine Author, "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," yet presenting the same diversity in circumstantials which every kind of real unity, — that is, every kind of unity which is founded in nature, and is not a merely artificial production, — exhibits not less in the works of the natural, than in those of the spiritual, creation.

The Catholic theory of episcopacy being set aside as irreconcileable with the facts of the case, it remains to inquire whether we cannot, without the aid of that theory, satisfactorily account for the rise and progress of this form of ecclesiastical polity. This seems a task of no great difficulty. Episcopacy was bestowed upon the Church when, and no sooner than, the want of some such institution became felt. Like all the other regulations of the Apostles in matters of polity, it was instituted, not to give being to, but to meet the exigencies of, the Church; not because without it the Church was essentially imperfect, but because an extension of its organization had become desirable. The causes which gave rise to episcopacy were partly positive, and partly negative; or it may be regarded as, in one point of view, the manifestation of the unseen, essential, unity of Christians, and in another, as a provision against the evils of disunion, whether existing, or in prospect.

They form but a low estimate of the power of union inherent in Christianity, who deem it necessary to allege a divine prescription for the forms into which the Church life of the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles threw itself, episcopacy included. Even Romish theologians of the higher class — such as Moehler and others — have learned to take a truer view of the matter, and justly trace the whole of the higher organization of the Church, such as we find it in the fourth century, to the natural tendency of the strongest of all internal principles of unity — "the unity of the Spirit" — to produce a visible expression of itself. By means of this invisible tie, each Christian becomes one with all other Christians; each church naturally seeks an expression of its fellowship with other churches, acknowledging the same Lord, and professing the same faith; and the whole Church feels that Christ's prayer for the unity of His followers is but imperfectly realized, if there exist among its component portions only the invisible unity of the Spirit, without that appreciable inter-communion, in whatever way it may be exhibited, by which the "world" may be led to "believe" that

Jesus was the Sent of God. In the institution of the episcopate, the Church made the first advance towards the attainment of a visible expression of her internal unity.

Christianity, as it appears in the New Testament, knows nothing of the atomistic theory of modern independentism. There can be little doubt that, even in the apostolic age, the church of each considerable city — such as Rome or Ephesus — consisted, not of one congregation, but of several, who were collectively styled the church of that place; certain it is that such was the case towards the close of the first century. It could not be otherwise. The expansive power of Christianity caused it to break forth on all sides; and speedily the original congregation, or, in modern language, the mother church, of each city gave birth to other societies of Christians in the surrounding neighbourhood. In this way there were probably, in each locality, many distinct assemblages of worshippers; but, however numerous these assemblages may have been, they still formed but one Church, and were presided over, not each by its own isolated pastor, but by a college of presbyters, who, collectively, superintended the affairs of the whole society, or rather district. No notion is more at variance with the spirit of apostolic Christianity than that of societies of Christians existing in the same neighbourhood, but not in communion with each other, and not under a common government. The primitive Church of Jerusalem may be regarded as, in this respect, the model of the apostolic churches in general. The number of converts in that city, which rendered it impossible for them to assemble in one place for the exercise of public worship, must have given rise to a division into congregations; yet, in the inspired history, but one ministerial body is mentioned in connexion with this Church, — viz. the college of "elders" — who, under the quasi-episcopate of James the less, appear to have regulated its affairs in common, forming a single deliberative assembly, in which all matters of moment were discussed and decided. An arrangement by which an effectual safeguard was interposed against the feeling of dependence, and helplessness, under which the pastor, who is in a state of isolation, labours, and which has been found by experience to operate prejudicially both upon his own spiritual interests and those of the flock over whom he presides. In the primitive Church, each presbyter felt himself sustained in his dealings with the Christian people by the whole weight of authority belonging to the college of which he was a member; and the people, on their part, learned to look upon their pastors, not

as creatures of their own, but as officers of the Church, occupying a recognised position and independent rights. In the apostolic council (Acts, xv.) we see the whole Church, consisting of "the elders," "the brethren," or representatives of the people, and those of the Apostles who were then in Jerusalem, discussing, in united and harmonious operation, the important question upon which differences of opinion had arisen.

This union of the congregations of a certain district under a common presbytery sufficed, for a time, to satisfy the cravings of the Christian mind for social combination. But a senate, or presbytery, is, at best, an imperfect exponent of social or corporate sentiment, which ever loves to see itself embodied in a person. It is only a person that can call forth, and attract to himself, the emotions of love and veneration to which Christianity gives peculiar scope; it is only around a person that men are found to coalesce heartily for a common purpose. The *idea* therefore of a centre of unity for each church must have soon presented itself to the minds of Christians, and the more strongly, the greater the number of congregations in a given circuit; for where there is a strong natural impulse to unity, a multiplicity of parts, instead of diminishing, adds intensity to it. How far this tendency to centralization inherent in Christianity may have succeeded in producing a living centre of unity previous to the apostolic appointment of bishops it is impossible to say; but it is extremely probable that from a very early period an informal episcopate had of itself sprung up in each church, — that is, that in each there existed some one presbyter, who, on account of his personal qualifications, exercised an undefined influence over both presbyters and people, and served unconsciously as a visible bond of unity to the whole body; and that the Apostles only gave a fixed form and an Apostolic sanction to an arrangement which, in rudiment at least, they found already existing. In the eloquent language of Moehler, "the craving of the faithful in Christ for combination cannot rest satisfied until it sees itself expressed in some type, or representation. The bishop is the visible expression of this longing, — the personification of the mutual love of the Christians of a given locality, — the manifestation, and the living centre, of that Christian spirit which ever strives after unity."*

If we may suppose that an informal episcopate of the kind just mentioned had spontaneously arisen in the principal churches of

* Einheit in der Kirche, p. 187.

Christendom, we shall have what the synagogue fails to supply us with, — an historical basis for the episcopate. Certainly this supposition is more probable than that adopted by several writers of eminence, who trace episcopacy to the practice, common in all deliberative assemblies, of selecting an individual, superior to the rest either in age, station, or capacity, to act as president for the time being: the authority of this presiding presbyter at first, as they conceive, ceasing with the occasion which gave rise to it, but gradually assuming a more permanent character, and a wider sphere of exercise, until at length he came to be styled, by way of distinction, "the overseer" — ὁ ἐπίσκοπος.* Moreover, thus possibly may the statements of Jerome be explained, who, as is well known, affirms that episcopacy is derived, not from a divine precept, but from the custom of the Church, and yet cannot be supposed to intend to contradict the unanimous tradition of antiquity, that it is of apostolical origin. It may be that the rudiment of episcopacy was, in fact, the spontaneous production of the Church — the result of the instinctive tendency of the Christians of each locality to gather round a visible centre; and yet that the formal institution of the episcopal office was an act of apostolic authority. The general spirit in which the Apostles proceeded in fixing the polity of the Church, permitting, as they did, the Christian society to develope as much as possible out of itself the elements of its visible organization, forbids the supposition that in establishing this new office they instituted one hitherto unknown even in idea, and without any existing rudimental basis.

But, whatever be the degree of weight that may belong to this hypothesis, certain it is that the idea of a visible centre of unity is one which naturally arises wherever there exists a community of Christians. In the case of the episcopate, as in every other, the visible organization of the Church developed itself from within outwards, not vice versâ. If the Apostles, when they instituted the new office, had no external rudiment of it before their eyes, they yet found an *internal* groundwork present, and only gave a visible expression to a pre-existing sentiment. Episcopacy was given to the Church, not as a law imposed from without, but as a suitable expression of the inner spirit; not (to adopt the language of a profound writer) as "a shape superinduced upon a passive

* Mosh. De Reb. Christian. Sæc. I. s. 41.; Calvin. Institut. lib. iv. c. 4. s. 2.; Neander, Allgemein. Gesch. I. p. 292.

material, but an organic form"* thrown out naturally by the energy of the life within. It may confidently be affirmed that, where Christianity is not enfeebled by adverse influences, its visible organization will always tend to something of an episcopal form, however much the name of episcopacy may be repudiated.

But, besides being positively the natural expression of the inner sentiment of union existing among Christians, episcopacy is to be viewed as a safeguard against the evils of division, whether among the pastors of the Church, or the Christian people at large. The testimony of Jerome on this point is well known: "Before there were factions in religion, and the people began to say, I am of Paul, I of Apollo, and I of Cephas, the churches were governed by a common council of presbyters. But when every man thought those whom he had baptized to be his own, and not Christ's, it was decreed throughout the world that one chosen out of the presbyters should be set above the rest, to whom the whole care of the Church should appertain, that thus the seeds of division might be rooted out."† In fact, the state of the Church about the period to which the institution of the episcopate is to be assigned — viz. A. D. 70 — was such as must naturally have given rise to apprehensions that, when once the controlling authority of the Apostles should be removed, Christendom would become a scene of intestine strife, and the pure doctrine of the Gospel perish amidst the corruptions of heresy. Both these noxious influences were, as we know from St. Paul's epistles, actively at work during the Apostle's own lifetime; and to his prophetic eye the future prospects of the Church were still more gloomy.‡ The parties which divided the Christian community were, as we may gather from the instance of the Corinthian Church, in which four rival factions contended for the superiority, very numerous; but two principal ones were to be found, not only there, but in almost every Christian society, which derived their

* "There is a difference between form as proceeding, and shape as superinduced; the latter is either the death or the imprisonment of the thing; the former is its self-witnessing sphere of agency."—"Confounding mechanical regularity with organic form. The form is mechanic when on any given material we impress a predetermined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material; as, when to a mass of clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate: it shapes, it developes itself from within, and the fulness of its developement is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form."—Coleridge, Remains, vol. i. p. 229.; ii. p. 67. Pregnant words, which furnish the clue to a right apprehension of the history of the Church throughout its whole course.

† Quoted by bishop Bilson, Perpetual Government, &c. p. 268.

‡ See Acts, xx. 29, 30.; 2 Tim. iii. 1—14.; iv. 3, 4.

distinctive appellations from the leading Apostles—St. Peter and St. Paul. Peter, though he had been taught by special revelation that, under the Gospel dispensation, there was to be no difference between Jew and Gentile, was by no means, as the narrative in Gal. ii. 11. 14. proves, able at once to subdue his Jewish prejudices, and enter fully into the universal spirit of Christianity. From his greater veneration, therefore, for the Mosaic law, as well as from his being especially the Apostle of the circumcision, the Jewish Christians, particularly that section of them which was most zealous for the law, adopted, however unwarrantably, his name as the watchword of their party. What the views of this party in general were is easily gathered from St. Paul's epistles. It has been already observed, that the first Jewish converts were far from conceiving that in becoming Christians they were ceasing to be Jews: the historical connexion between Judaism and Christianity forbad such a notion. The same Old Testament Scriptures, to which the Apostles appealed as furnishing the evidence of prophecy for Christianity, declared also the divine origin of the Mosaic institutions; which, therefore, as long as no divine intimation of their having been abrogated was given, the Jewish Christians naturally conceived to be still in force. The moderate section of this party was content that the law should be considered binding only upon believers of the circumcision, the Gentile converts being exempted from the necessity of observing it; but the more zealous among them entertained views which were directly opposed to the fundamental principles of the Gospel. These latter held that the ceremonial law was obligatory not only upon the Jewish, but upon the Gentile converts; and made submission to the rite of circumcision an essential condition of salvation. Their first appearance was at Antioch; their proceedings in which place gave occasion to the Apostolic council at Jerusalem. By the decision of this council, which released the Gentile Christians from the obligation of the legal ordinances, the Judaizing teachers were for a time silenced; but the dispute soon broke out again, and with increased virulence. Nor was it confined, as before, to certain localities; in every church, in which, on account of its mixed composition, they found a Jewish element to work upon, the zealots of the law endeavoured to propagate their tenets, and, as we learn from the epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, with considerable success. As might be expected, St. Paul, their chief antagonist, was regarded by them with aversion and dread; and it became part of their plan of

operation to institute unfavourable comparisons between him and the Apostles who had seen Christ in the flesh, with the view of throwing doubt upon the reality of his apostolic mission.*

Among the Christians of purely heathen origin, the peculiar type of sentiment just mentioned could not, of course, gain a footing. Unfettered by Jewish associations, they threw themselves, without an effort, into their great teacher's views; for their former polytheism had never had any real hold upon their minds. But, as one extreme usually calls forth an opposite one, the enmity of the ultra-Jewish party towards St. Paul and his doctrine appears to have produced, among the Gentile converts, a counter-movement, which exhibited itself in the formation of a party, adopting the name of the Apostle of the Gentiles as its watchword, and professing to attach peculiar weight to his opinions. What the dogmatical tendencies of this party were we are not distinctly informed; but we may presume that, as their opponents unduly magnified the authority of the Mosaic law, they, on the contrary, displayed a tendency to depreciate the Old Testament Scriptures, and to sever Christianity from its historical basis — the institutions of Moses. Their practical error consisted in a want of due consideration for the scruples of their weaker brethren, whom they were too often inclined to regard with contempt, and to offend by an inconsiderate use of their Christian liberty.†

This was the state of things towards the latter part of the Apostle Paul's career; and it threatened serious consequences to Christianity. In most of the considerable churches two parties existed side by side, which, from the zeal with which they maintained and propagated their peculiar opinions, must necessarily have lost sight, more and more, of the great truths which they held in common, and assumed a hostile attitude towards each other. The result, which there was too much reason to apprehend, was an open schism with all its attendant evils. On the one hand, the churches which were composed exclusively, or principally, of converted heathens would gradually lose their feeling of Christian fellowship with those in which Jewish converts predominated, and especially with the churches of Palestine; while the latter would be in danger of openly relapsing into Judaism. That this latter was no imaginary danger is evident from the epistle to the Hebrews, in which the persons addressed appear as wavering in their allegiance to Christ, even to the extent of no

* See 1 Cor. ix.; 2 Cor. x. and xi. † See Rom. c. 14.; 1 Cor. viii.

longer frequenting the public assemblies of the Church,* and which was written with the view of proving to them that the shadows of the law had their completion and fulfilment in the verities of the Gospel.

But, besides the danger of schism, there was another which, at the period of which we are speaking, threatened the Church, — viz. the outbreak of that prolific swarm of heresies which appeared almost simultaneously with the preaching of the Gospel, and which left no doctrine of Christianity unassailed. Many of these early heresies are alluded to by St. Paul; and, from the general characteristics which he assigns to them, we gather that they were, for the most part, different forms of Gnosticism, the fruitful parent, in that age, of anti-Christian error. The heresiarchs pretended to possess an esoteric version of the Gospel, more profound than that which the Apostles preached in public: they adopted the doctrine of the inherent evil of matter, and inculcated a severe asceticism, which, however, was not found incompatible with gross practical immorality. Some affirmed that there was no resurrection of the body; others that it had already taken place; while a third party denied the proper humanity of our Lord. When, even during the lifetime of the Apostles, tares of this kind had become visible among the wheat, what might not be expected to take place when their personal superintendence was withdrawn? In fact, St. Paul, when taking leave of the elders of the Ephesian church, expresses his forebodings that his departure from amongst them would be the signal for an unusual manifestation of heresy, even among the very presbyters whom he was addressing.

The pastoral epistles of this Apostle, written at the close of his ministry, betray a vivid sense of the dangers which, from both the sources just mentioned, threatened the interests of Christ's kingdom. Soon afterwards both he and the Apostle Peter were removed from the scene of their earthly labours; — a circumstance which, by depriving the Church of the two leading members of the apostolic college, rendered the aspect of things still more gloomy. It was at this time, according to the most probable conjecture which we can form, that, with the view of meeting the impending mischiefs before they came to a head, the surviving Apostles added to the previously existing orders of the Christian ministry that of the episcopate. The original government by a college of elders, suited as it was to the infancy of the Church,

* Heb. x. 25.

could no longer cope successfully with the difficulties occasioned by the waning of the "first love" of Christians, the dissensions of rival parties, and the advance of heresy. A stronger external bond of union had become indispensable: more of form, and outward regimen, was needed to fix and preserve what remained of the spirit; chrystallisation was the natural consequence of the cooling of the internal heat of the mass. The less lively the sense which Christians retained of their spiritual unity in Christ, the more did they need to be reminded of it by a visible symbol thereof: the greater the danger of the apostolic doctrine being lost amidst the corruptions of heresy, the greater the necessity of its being connected with an objective, historical, basis. To understand fully the advantages which heresy possessed in that age, we must remember that as yet the sacred writings had not been collected, much less the canon of Scripture fixed; so that an appeal to the written testimony of the Apostles in refutation of the pretensions of the false teachers, was by no means so easy then as it is now. The pressing wants of the Church, in the points just mentioned, suggested of themselves the nature of the remedy to be provided. The new institution must be such as, by the force of a central authority, to silence, or mitigate, the dissensions of the presbyters, and gather the orthodox believers in each church round a visible centre; and it must be fitted to be an organ of communication between the several churches of Christendom: thus, on the one hand, schismatical tendencies would be repressed, and, on the other, a fence would be raised against the incursions of heresy. For Christian doctrine being the common property of all Christian churches, what was held by all commended itself as the original deposit of the Apostles; and this being ascertained by a comparison of the doctrine taught in each, the aberrations of any particular party, or church, would become apparent. Heresy being the natural attendant upon isolation, the natural corrective of it is inter-communion of all the parts of the body with each other. Both these requirements are found united in the episcopate, according to the idea of it presented in the writings of the early fathers. Regarded from their point of view, the bishop of each church constitutes the visible centre and type of unity, round whom the faithful are congregated in indissoluble union (plebs pastori adunata); at the same time, his office is ecumenical, and he serves as the formal channel of intercourse between his own church and the other Christian societies throughout the world. By an office of this kind the rapidly approaching failure of the personal superintendence of the Apos-

tles, who, collectively, had hitherto formed a common bond of union to the churches of Christ, would be in some measure compensated, and the evils likely to ensue from their removal averted, as far as human means could avert them; and, accordingly, it is probable that soon after (A. D. 70), the surviving Apostles enlarged the polity of the Church by the establishment of the episcopate. As has been already remarked, the destruction of the temple, which took place about that period, by effectually severing the link which existed between the Jewish converts and their unbelieving brethren, rendered the introduction of the episcopal element a matter of easy accomplishment. The Judaizing party, so long as it could point to the continued existence of the legal institutions, had a pretext for refusing to coalesce heartily with their Christian brethren, who denied the obligation of the law; but the final cessation of the temple services removed this obstacle, and, by drawing the bonds of union closer among all, of whatever party, who sincerely professed the name of Christ, opened a way for the new institution. To this period, also, is probably to be assigned the first appearance of that fundamental error which speedily pervaded the whole Church, — viz. the identification of the Christian ministry with the Levitical priesthood, the bishop corresponding to the high priest, the presbyters to the common priests, and the deacons to the Levites; and (as a necessary consequence) the transformation of the Eucharist into a real sacrifice. As long as the Jewish institutions were in existence, neither of the chief parties which divided the Church would be likely to adopt such a view; not the followers of St. Paul, because they were strongly opposed to everything connected with Judaism; not the Christians of Jewish origin, because, as long as the temple stood, they regarded their churches in the light of Christian synagogues, and, in the mind of a Jew, no association existed between the synagogue and the ideas of priesthood and sacrifice. But when the temple services ceased, these restrain ing causes would no longer operate: the Christians of heathen origin would naturally lose much of their jealousy of Jewish customs; while the Jewish converts, the sacrificial part of the Mosaic economy being now at an end, would be tempted to reproduce it under the Gospel; and thus, probably, sprang up a notion which soon led to the substitution of another Gospel for that originally delivered, and the practical results of which are recorded in the history of Romanism in every age.*

* For a full account of the state of the Church towards the close of the apostolic age, see

Such were the natural causes which produced episcopacy, the only office connected with the Christian ministry, besides the presbyterate and diaconate, which can lay claim to an apostolical origin. Bishops were added to the two earlier orders, not from any notion of their being channels of Christ's covenanted grace, or as being necessary to the being of the Church, but partly because Christianity naturally settles into visible forms of organic unity, and partly because the wants of the age dictated an extension of the existing arrangements. The law of nature, and of order, is abundantly sufficient to account for the phenomenon, without our having recourse to a supposed divine prescription.

Upon the subsequent and still more comprehensive forms of unity which followed the episcopate, it falls not within the scope of the present work to enlarge: they are confessed, by all but Romanists, to have been neither of divine nor of apostolical appointment, but simply ecclesiastical arrangements. Even the modern philosophical school of Romanists appears to have abandoned the attempt to trace up to Christ or His Apostles anything beyond the episcopate, and for the traditionary Scriptural proofs of the supremacy of the bishop of Rome to have substituted the modern theory of development, which has recently excited so much attention in the theological world. It is thus, at least, that Moehler conducts the argument, in his work on the Unity of the Church. The idea, he argues, of the unity of the church was progressive, unfolding itself gradually as time went on, like the continually widening circles of a disturbed sheet of water. Hence, before Cyprian's time, when the unity of the whole Church first became a matter of consciousness among Christians, there could be no pope, even in rudiment: — "they who require, before that period, incontrovertible proofs of the existence of the primacy require what is unreasonable, the law of a true development not admitting of it: and, vice versa, the trouble which some have given themselves to discover, before the same epoch, the full idea of a Pope, or the notion that they have discovered it, must be considered as vain, and their conclusions untenable. As throughout the inferior organization of the Church, so, in this point, the want must be felt, before the supply could be found."* "It is evident that during the first three centuries, and even at the close of them, the primacy is not visible, save in its first lineaments: it operates as

Rothe, Anfänge, &c. pp. 309—346, to whose researches on the subject of episcopacy the present writer has been much indebted.

* Einheit in der Kirche, Abt. 2. s. 68.

yet but informally; and when the question arises where, and how, did it practically manifest itself, we must confess that it never appears alone, but always in conjunction with other churches and bishops; though it is true that a peculiar character is already seen to attach to the Roman see."* This view of the growth of the papacy has not only the advantage of being historically true, but of sparing learned and candid Romanists the necessity of distorting the expressions of Scripture, and of the early fathers, into a meaning which they never were intended to bear. Nor does the candid abandonment of Scriptural proof for the doctrine of the Roman pontiff at all shake the dogmatical structure of Rome. For in this, as in all other instances, it is not upon Scripture that the stress of proof is ultimately laid, but upon the Church. According to Romanism, the visible Church is the impersonation of Christ,—the perpetuation of "God manifest in the flesh:" hence it matters little whether a practice, or a doctrine, be found in Scripture or not, because the decision of the Church in its favour is sufficient to stamp upon it the seal of divine authority; any development whatever which she may sanction taking its place among the truths of revelation. No Romanist, therefore, who understands his own system, need feel any scruple in admitting that Scripture is silent upon the supremacy of the bishop of Rome, or the first three centuries upon the doctrine of purgatory: neither Scripture, nor the fathers, but the decisions of the present infallible church, form the real basis of his faith: Scripture itself, the great writers of his communion tell him, is the Word of God, because the Church has pronounced it to be so. We are by no means, therefore, to understand that the *Romish* advocates of the theory of development deem the doctrines or practices of their church, the non-existence of which in Scripture, or in the early fathers, they account for by the application of that theory, to be at all less binding than those for which direct Scriptural evidence can be adduced.

The progress which the Church, when deprived of Apostolic superintendence, made in the work of organization abundantly confirms the theory of episcopacy above propounded, and proves that, even if the Apostles had not given her bishops, she would probably have given them to herself. The same powerful tendency to union which led the Christians of a certain locality to congregate round a visible centre impelled in like manner neigh-

* Einheit in der Kirche, Abt. 2. s. 71.

bouring churches to establish an association among themselves, and this not merely in the way of casual intercourse, but by means of recognized organs. The bishop's office now began to assume that double character — ecumenical as well as well as local — which it is found to bear in the pages of Cyprian and Augustin. Churches could not communicate with each other directly, but they might do so by means of representatives; and no one appeared so fit to be the representative of his Church as he who in it was the visible symbol of unity. Those bishops, therefore, who resided within a reasonable distance from each other soon fell into the practice of assembling, as the representatives of their respective churches, first informally, and then formally, and at stated intervals, for the purposes of mutual recognition and consultation upon ecclesiastical matters; on which occasions they were commonly accompanied by delegates from the presbyters and laity. This was the origin of synods. Nor did the centralizing process stop here. As the presbyters of each church formed a council presided over by the bishop, so it was natural that the councils of bishops should develop from themselves a visible centre of unity; accidental circumstances — such as a church having been founded by an Apostle, or its importance in a political point of view — fixing where the centre should be. Thus it was that the metropolitan sees came into existence. The beneficial effects which this arrangement was calculated to produce are obvious. As in differences arising between a presbyter and his flock, the former was either supported or disowned by his colleagues, with the bishop at their head, so, by the union of bishops under the metropolitan, individual eccentricities were kept in check, while, on the other hand, the authority of each bishop in his own church, which, had he been isolated, might not always have sufficed to restrain corruptions in doctrine or practice, was strengthened by the countenance and sympathy of the whole episcopate. Thus the strong supported the weak, and the weak, by union with the strong, were no longer weak. The diseased member of the body received from the sound ones the restorative treatment which his case demanded. In the important work of appointing a bishop to a vacant see, the advantages of metropolitanism were especially apparent. The election of the new bishop proceeding, according to the custom of those times, from the Church itself, composed of people and presbyters, it was by no means beyond the range of possibility that their choice might fall upon an improper person, faction, or the popular will, prevailing against the voice of the better part of the

community. The danger hence arising was guarded against by the rule which prevailed, — that two or three at least of the neighbouring bishops, and always the metropolitan, should assist at the consecration of every bishop; and that no appointment should be deemed valid unless it had been ratified by the other churches of the province, their approval of the election being testified by the reception from the new bishop, and transmission to him, of formal letters of communion, termed *epistolæ communicatoriæ*.

The metropolitan circles of unity soon expanded into still more extensive combinations. Christianity knowing no local limits, no legitimate reason could be assigned why the work of consolidation, which had been carried so far as to unite the bishops of a province together, should not advance until stopped by political impediments. As long as the Roman empire held together, no such impediments existed. Hence we find provinces coalescing into patriarchates; political considerations determining the patriarchal sees to the three leading churches of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria. Later on, Rome, the capital of the world, and the scene of the labours and death of the great Apostles Peter and Paul, is seen assuming the lead in ecclesiastical, as once in political, affairs; the Roman patriarch becomes invested, not by any formal delegation of power, but by tacit consent and the custom of the Church, with an undefined precedency in the ecclesiastical councils of western Christendom. In the age of Cyprian, as the writings of that father abundantly prove, the idea of a visible centre of unity for the Christians of the Roman empire had already assumed in men's minds a distinct form and consistence.*

It was thus that, by means of metropolitans and patriarchates, the whole Church visible was brought into formal communion, though the unity was not yet organic, inasmuch as the visible head was wanting. Through its bishop, each local church was brought into connexion with the Church universal. Hence arose the idea, so intimately pervading Cyprian's writings, of the unity of the collected episcopate; the bishops of the Church forming a corporation, each member of which possessed an ecumenical authority and was responsible, so to speak, for the well-being of the whole Christian body, as well as for that of his own particular charge. "The Church," he writes, "one and Catholic, is knit and compacted together by the mutual adhesion of a cemented priesthood" (or episcopate);† "as the one Church has been divided

* See the quotations from Cyprian in the concluding chapter of this work.

† Epist. 69. Ad Flor. Pup.

by Christ into many members throughout the world, so the one episcopate is every where diffused by the harmonious multiplicity of many bishops." * Nor was this mere theory: the idea was realized. When distance prevented the personal intercourse of bishops, the defect was supplied by a constant epistolary correspondence; and no event of importance occurred in any part of the Christian world but it was immediately communicated to the whole Church. The churches of Lyons and Vienna, in describing the sufferings of their martyrs, address themselves to "the brethren in Asia and Phrygia, having the same faith and the same hope of redemption with themselves." † The opposition which Cornelius, the legitimate bishop of Rome, experienced from Novatian and his followers, excited the liveliest interest at Carthage. "He" (Cornelius) "was made bishop," writes Cyprian to Antoninus, a bishop of Numidia, "by very many of our colleagues then present in Rome, who sent us letters, highly honourable to him, and full of his praise, to signify to us his appointment. The chair of St. Peter having been thus filled according to the will of God, and the appointment having been confirmed by the consent of us all" (*i. e.* the whole episcopate), "whosoever shall now attempt to intrude himself into it must of necessity be outside the pale of the Church; for he has not the Church's ordination who does not hold the Church's unity." ‡ Cornelius, on the other hand, when some of the confessors who had taken part with Novatian, returned to the communion of the Church, immediately communicates the intelligence to Cyprian, with a request that he would take care to transmit it to the rest of the churches, that "all may know that this crafty and perverse heretic (Novatian) is daily losing influence." § Excommunication by any church, however insignificant, shut the offender out from the communion of the Church universal: no bishop would receive him to fellowship, until the sentence had been reversed by the same authority which had pronounced it. Paul of Samosata having propounded some doctrines subversive of the proper divinity of Christ, immediately, to use the words of Eusebius, "the pastors of the neighbouring churches came together from every quarter as against a destroyer of Christ's flock, and convoked an assembly at Antioch;" the result of which was that "this arch-heretic was convicted, and excommunicated from the whole Catholic Church under heaven." The decision of the council was communicated, in a letter ad-

* Epist. 52. Ad Anton.

† Euseb. lib. v. c. l.

‡ Epist. 52. Ad Anton.

§ Ad Cyp. (Epist. 46.)

dressed by the writers, "to Dionysius" (Bishop of Rome) "and Maximus" (Bishop of Alexandria), "and their fellow-ministers, bishops, presbyters, and deacons, throughout the world;" in which they also signify that a new bishop had been appointed in Paul's stead, and request that letters of fellowship (*γράμματα κοινωνικά*) may be transmitted on both sides.* Such was the unity of the Church in the third and fourth centuries; exhibiting no inadequate exemplification of the Apostle's words, "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." In this respect, justice has not been done to the Christianity of those ages. Corrupt as it was in many important points, it yet presented a phenomenon which the world had never yet beheld. A vast association, extending over every part of the Roman empire, and beyond it, maintained its ground, not only without the aid, but in spite of the hostility, of the state; exhibiting everywhere the same general features, and pervaded through all its parts by an electric sympathy of feeling, and a compactness of adhesion, which to the heathen statesman or philosopher must have been inexplicable. It is easy, with the infidel historian, or with the sectarian Christian, to attribute the characteristic features of the visible Church, at the period in question, to priestly ambition, or other evil tendencies of human nature; but the Christian of larger views, and greater candour, will see in it a striking proof of the power of his religion, even when disfigured with many errors, to knit men together in a bond of union, far exceeding in power, and in comprehensiveness, any that mere political or social relations can furnish.

The papacy itself, the topmost stone of the edifice, followed, as a matter of course, in due time. When once the Cyprianic idea of the unity of the universal episcopate had taken hold of men's minds, that of a living centre, in whom the whole body should see its unity visibly represented, speedily suggested itself, and began to work its way towards its realization. And, regarded merely as the efflorescence of the episcopate, the ecclesiastical centre of Western Christendom, it must be admitted that there is nothing in the idea of the papacy positively anti-christian. If it be not anti-christian for the faithful of a diocese to gather themselves round a bishop, or for the bishops of a province to evolve out of their body a metropolitan centre, no more was it anti-christian for the episco-

* Euseb. lib. vii. c. 30.

pate of an empire, or of the whole Church, to develope from itself a living centre of unity, which should have the effect of consolidating, and binding together, the whole body.

To refer the papacy of the middle ages to a purely satanic origin is as wide of the truth as it is to make it the institution of Christ Himself: it was the result of natural causes, and can lay no claim to a supernatural character, whether diabolical or divine. Every successive step from the commencement to the completion of the church system can be distinctly traced in history; and an impartial survey of the whole field thus opened to our view will probably convince us that, in the construction of the papal edifice, human passions, human sins, and even human virtues, had the largest share. The successive popes as much obeyed as they led the tendencies of the age: Western Christendom was as ready, nay anxious, to confer upon the bishop of Rome the prerogative of supreme power, temporal and spiritual, as he was to receive the fatal boon. De Maistre has reminded Protestants, and the justice of his remark no one can deny, that where there is on one side a voluntary surrender of inherited rights, it is idle to talk of *usurpation* on the other; and, in fact, the mediæval bishops of Rome only exercised powers which had been delegated to them with the free, or apparently free, consent of the Church and the State. If the Church was willing that unlimited ecclesiastical power should be deposited in the hands of a single bishop, and if emperors were content to hold their dominions as fiefs of Rome, can we wonder if the Holy See did not feel itself bound to reject the proffered dignity, or to take pains to remind its suitors of the primitive equality of bishops, and of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom? Especially when, to a pious mind contemplating the social disorders of the age, it might well seem that no remedy that could be applied to rectify those disorders was so likely to succeed as the erection of a central authority, feeble in a temporal point of view, but wielding spiritual powers before which the haughtiest princes must bow, and standing in the relation of a common father to all the nations of Europe. The sentiments of disapprobation with which we must view the language and actions of certain popes will probably be considerably mitigated if we bear in mind that they were men, and that their position was one of peculiar difficulty and temptation. Who, in fact, shall venture to attribute to such a man as Leo the Great a deliberate design to establish the papal throne upon the ruins of apostolic Christianity? The event, indeed, has proved that to no human hand can the sceptre of universal empire, spirit-

ual or temporal, be safely confided; but the intolerable evils which sprang from the papal rule, in its fully developed form, were yet in the womb of time, and were unforeseen. In short, regarding the papacy as a natural result, the slowly accumulated concretion of many ages; as the visible symbol of the unity of the whole Church; as a sheltering inclosure which preserved the great objective truths of the Gospel during periods of wide-spread heresy and political anarchy; we can neither feel surprise at the appearance of the phenomenon, nor refuse to recognise in it a permissive dispensation, which divine providence made subservient to its own purposes. At what point, then, it may be asked, did the system of which papal Rome is the head and centre assume a decidedly anti-Christian character? we reply, when to the *fact* of the chief patriarchate of the See of Rome the *doctrine* of the Roman pontiff, as laid down in the formularies of Trent, and expounded by the great writers of the papal communion, was appended; an addition which totally changed the relations between the church of Rome and the other churches of the Christian commonwealth. With some observations upon this important point, the more important because a similar change of fact into doctrine meets us in every page of Church history, the present section shall be brought to a close.

The reader will probably have already perceived that the principle which has throughout governed the construction of the Church system, especially in matters of polity, is, *the transformation of points of Apostolic order, or ecclesiastical custom, into divine laws;* a principle which rests for support on the dogma, that the Church is the representative, and impersonation, of Christ upon earth, and which, it is easy to see, was adopted in order to convert her into a legal institution, and to represent her as, in her post-apostolic forms of polity, a divinely appointed mediatrix between man and God. Whatever part of the Church system we examine, we see the working of this principle. Thus it is that on infant baptism, a subject on which Scripture is well nigh silent a doctrinal structure is raised which, instead of confining itself within the range of pious opinion, boldly claims to be a matter of faith: thus, too, it is that the rite of confirmation, for which at most we have but the analogical precedent of the laying on of the Apostles' hands (analogical because the apostolic imposition of hands differed essentially from every subsequent one), is exalted into a divinely appointed means of grace, and made a Sacrament. By the application of the same potent instrument it

is that, as regards ecclesiastical polity, the episcopal form of government is made to assume the character of a divine law in the same sense in which the Aaronic priesthood was; becomes a necessary condition of Christ's presence in his Church, and of immutable obligation. In another branch of the Romish controversy, this principle is employed to give a quasi-divine authority to the creeds of the Church.

There are several stages, or degrees, in the application of it. First, the apostolic appointments, or practices, recorded in Scripture, are, without any warrant from the Apostles themselves for the statement, declared to be of divine authority, and essential to the being of the Church: next, the same divine sanction is extended to such appointments as, from the testimony of uninspired history, — alone, or combined with Scripture, — we have reason to believe to be apostolical: the third stage is, when every custom of the Church, whether it pretend to be of apostolical origin or not, if only it be ancient and universal, is affirmed to be of perpetual obligation: and last comes the distinctive principle of Tridentine Romanism — viz. that the decisions of the present church, whether as regards doctrine or practice, have the force of divine laws, and come to us with the same authority as if Christ Himself had promulgated them.

The real difference, on this point, between Romanists and Protestants should be carefully borne in mind. It is not merely that the Romish church retains certain practices which the reformed churches have abandoned; or that the former possesses, while the latter are without, a pope: the true point of difference between the advocates and the opponents of the Church system consists in the *authoritative sanction* which they respectively claim for this and every other development of church polity. While the Protestant views the organization of the Church as the result of natural causes, operating under apostolic guidance and control, the Romanist regards it as an arbitrary appointment, emanating directly from God. Not content with arguing that the changes introduced from time to time into the polity of the Church were conceived in an apostolical spirit, and, on this ground, are to be retained, Rome has ever claimed for them a directly divine sanction: — the pope received from Christ Himself a commission to represent Him upon earth; episcopacy was in the original draught of church government delivered by Christ to the Apostles; and so on throughout. The Protestant protests not so much against the fact of the primacy of the bishop of Rome as against the sanction which it claims, —

the ground on which it is placed: he retains episcopacy where he can, but he rejects the so-called catholic theory of it. In like manner he practises infant baptism, and the laying on of hands; but neither in the one case nor the other does he venture to allege a divine prescription for his practice.

The occasions which first gave rise to this distinctive principle of Tridentine, as contrasted with genuine—*i. e.* Protestant—Catholicism, were those on which the early bishops had to contend against sectarian tendencies, or the encroachments of an insubordinate spirit. From time to time there appeared in the Church men, both lay and clerical, who, whether from pure or corrupt motives, found fault with the existing state of things, and endeavoured to bring about what they conceived to be a reformation: failing in which attempt, they too often became open opponents of their bishop, and established rival communions. Such at Carthage, in the time of Cyprian, were Novatus and Felicissimus, the authors of the schism which figures so prominently in the writings of that father; and such characters there probably were in the churches to which Ignatius addressed his epistles: a supposition which explains, if not justifies, his unguarded expressions. The merits or demerits of Novatus and Felicissimus being put aside as irrelevant to the question, the facts were these:—a party among the presbyters of Carthage had, from the first, opposed Cyprian's elevation to that see, and, when their efforts to prevent his election proved unavailing, they continued to evince a strong feeling of hostility towards him: of these the most influential was Novatus, who, among other acts of insubordination, ordained a certain Felicissimus deacon, without the knowledge or consent of his bishop. At length the anti-Cyprianic party broke out into open schism, and appointed Fortunatus, one of their number, Bishop of Carthage in opposition to Cyprian. The proceedings of these men were manifestly subversive of all order, and highly censurable; but what is the ground which Cyprian takes against them? Instead of treating the schism as a breach of Christian unity, and apostolic order, he at once denounces it as a sacrilegious violation of the divine law. "There is," he says, "but one God, one Christ, one Church, one" (episcopal) "chair, founded upon a rock by the Word of the Lord. There can be but one altar and one priest (bishop). Whoever elsewhere collects, scatters. Whatever is set up by men contrary to the divine appointment, is spurious, impious, sacrilegious."* "The opposite party," he writes

* Epist. 40. Ad Pleb.

to Cornelius, "ordained for itself a bishop, and, violating the Sacrament and divine ordinance of Catholic unity, created a spurious head in a state of schism."* Nor does he hesitate to rank Fortunatus and his party with those who, under the Mosaic economy, set at nought the priest's authority (Deut. xvii. 12.):— "How can they escape the judgment of an avenging God who heap reproaches not only on their brethren, but upon the priests" (bishops), "upon whom God was pleased to bestow such honour that whoever should refuse obedience to the priest for the time being was to be put to death."† And, in a still stronger passage:—"Heresies spring from no other cause than from an insubordinate spirit towards the priest of God, and from not recollecting that in a Church there can be but one priest and one judge, who, for the time being, is the vicar of Christ."‡

It was when placed in circumstances like these that the rulers of the Church, and they men of a sincere and fervent piety, yielded to the natural, but fatal, temptation to overstep the limits of truth, and, in order to silence or suppress the turbulence of faction, ascribe a divine authority to every part of the polity of the Church as it then existed. A pious fraud, the consequences of which should be a warning to those who, in our own day, are tempted to adopt a similar line of argument in contending with dissent. It was competent to Cyprian to meet his opponents on solid Scriptural ground, to insist upon the evils of schism, and warn his flock against the devices of crafty schismatics: but, not content with this, he arrogates to himself and his order, without scruple, the prerogatives of the Jewish priesthood, and places all, whatever their motives might be, who offered resistance to his claims, in the same category with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. "Can that man," he asks, "think that he has communion with Christ who separates himself from the communion of Christ's clergy and people? He wages war against the Church, against the ordinance of God. An enemy of the altar, rebellious against the sacrifice of Christ, perfidious instead of believing, sacrilegious instead of religious, &c., he dares to set up another altar, and profane the true offering of the Lord by false sacrifices: not knowing that he who thus opposes himself to the divine ordinance shall experience the divine chastisement of his temerity. Thus it was that Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, intruding themselves into the priest's office, in defiance of Moses and Aaron, received the

* Epist 42. Ad Cornel. † Epist. 55. Ad Cornel. ‡ Ibid.

just reward of their deed. Thus, too, king Uzziah, attempting, contrary to the divine law, to burn incense upon the altar, was struck with leprosy." * In such statements as these it was that the disingenuousness, the tampering with truth, characteristic of spurious — *i. e.* Roman, Catholicism, first displayed itself. Whoever ventured to raise his voice against any existing practice of the Church, however unscriptural it might be, — whether, like Jovinian and Vigilantius, the objector assailed the extravagant notions which had begun to prevail concerning the merit of celibacy, or the practices, verging to idolatry, connected with the invocation of saints, and the commemorations of the martyrs; or, as regards polity, offered any opposition to the hierarchical despotism which, in Cyprian's time, was making rapid progress, — was denounced as an enemy of Christ, a sacrilegious violator of the divine ordinances, a successor of Korah and his company. No distinction was made between what is commanded and what is merely recommended by precedent and example; between the sacraments ordained by Christ Himself and the regulations of the Apostles; between the apostolic appointments and those of the Church in subsequent times: — the whole of the external ritual and polity of the Church, as it existed in the fourth century, was equally declared to be of God's appointment, and adhesion to it made the indispensable condition of salvation. An error which could not have arisen, had not the true idea of the Church been lost, and its essential being supposed to lie in what was nothing but the visible manifestation of that being.

The dogma of the Roman pontiff grew up in a similar manner. That the See of Rome owed the commanding influence which it is found exercising at an early period to a concurrence of accidental circumstances is certain; nor, as has been already remarked, was there anything directly anti-Christian in the centralizing process by which the bishop of that Church became the virtual head of Christendom. In process of time, however, political changes occurred which necessarily produced collisions between the prerogatives, conceded or assumed, of the Holy See, and the rights of independent churches and nations. These events were, the partition of the Roman empire into the two great divisions of the east and the west, and the division of the western portion of it into the kingdoms of modern Europe. The new-born feeling of national life, called forth by these providential events, could not fail, sooner or later, to

* De Unit. Eccles.

manifest itself in a spirit of resistance to the encroachments, ever advancing, of the ecclesiastical power of Rome. Nations began to assert their sovereignty and independence: it was felt that there could be no security for the public safety as long as the national clergy, instead of being identified with the national interests, were the creatures of an extra-national power: kings and emperors bore with increasing impatience the interference of the bishops of Rome with their temporal prerogatives. At this point it was that the distinctively tridentine dogma of the papacy began to make its appearance. The spiritual power, with the view of averting the dangers which threatened it, took precisely the same ground which Cyprian had previously taken against the contumacious presbyters of Carthage. Custom and precedent were transformed into divine laws; to the *fact*, which could not be denied, that Rome had become the centre of unity to the Western Church, a *doctrine* was appended, viz. that the bishop of that Church is, by divine appointment, the infallible vicar of Christ, and ruler *jure divino* of the visible Church throughout the world: — the papacy was made an essential constituent of Christianity.* From this, of course, it followed that no church, however scriptural in doctrine, or apostolic in polity, it might be, which did not acknowledge the supremacy of the pope, could be a true Church: its members were out of the pale of salvation, delivered over to the uncovenanted mercies of God. Excommunication by the bishop of Rome cut the subject of it off from Christ. "He that reigneth on high, to whom is given all power in heaven and earth, hath committed the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church, out of which there is no salvation, to one alone on earth, — namely, to Peter, prince of the Apostles, and to the Roman pontiff, successor of Peter, to be governed with a plenitude of power."† "We declare, define, and pronounce, it to be of necessity to salvation that every human being be subject to the Roman pontiff."‡ To establish these claims, and give them the sanction of antiquity, pretended decretals of the early bishops of Rome were forged, in which these bishops were made to speak the language of subsequent times; just as in the so-called apostolical constitutions, which were composed about the beginning of the third century, and which, throughout, favour the hierarchical, legal,

* Thus Bellarmin does not hesitate to affirm, that with the dogma of the Roman pontiff Christianity stands or falls: — "De quâ re agitur, cum de primatu Pontificis agitur? brevissime dicam, de summâ rei Christianæ."— Præf. ad Lib. de Sum. Pont.

† Bull of Pope Pius against Elizabeth. Quoted by Barrow, "Supremacy, &c." Introd. s. 4.

‡ Boniface VIII. Ibid.

spirit which had begun to pervade the Church, the Apostles are introduced as laying down ecclesiastical canons according to the ideas of the age of Cyprian. Spurious Catholicism has ever displayed an absence of moral sensitiveness on the score of truth.* Scripture itself was made to bear witness to the divine commission of the successor of St. Peter. For a time, the Church — that is, the Papacy — was triumphant. Emperors were deposed, churches excommunicated, and every right, divine and human, violated. What availed it for the sufferers to remonstrate? A divine law supersedes mere natural right; a divine command removes every scruple of conscience. The Jews were doing a service to God in exterminating the nations of Canaan. If the pope be really the vicar of Christ — the ruler *jure divino* of the visible Church — the proceedings of a Hildebrand were perfectly justifiable. At length, however, the yoke became intolerable, and the feelings of impatience and disgust which had long been fermenting in secret, burst forth, and produced the reformation. It is worthy of observation, however, that, throughout that great movement, it was not so much the fact, as the doctrine, of the Roman primacy against which the reformers took up their position; they even declared that if the Bishop of Rome would acknowledge that his superiority to the other bishops was but by the custom of the Church, they, on their part, would leave him in undisturbed possession of his patriarchal relation to the churches of Western Christendom. The remarkable passage of Melancthon to that effect is well known: — "Concerning the Roman Pontiff, my opinion is, that, should he admit the Gospel, the precedence which he has hitherto enjoyed, as compared with other bishops, may, to preserve the peace and tranquility of those Christians who acknowledge his jurisdiction, be by us also accorded to him; but only *jure humano*."† But, the pope refusing either to allow free scope to the Gospel, or to relax in his personal pretensions, the reformers exhorted the sovereigns of their respective countries to resume the powers which rightfully belonged to them, and, with the consent of their people and nobles, to introduce the reforms which were universally desired, whether the bishop of Rome should agree thereto or not. For this they were threatened with excommunication, the effect of which would be to shut them out from the hope of salvation. But they took leave to

* Primo igitur fuerunt consuetudines; deinde factæ sunt leges; postea ut majorem legibus illis autoritatem conciliarent, traditionibus apostolorum eas tribuerunt.— Chemnitz, Exam. Conc. Trid. loc. i. s. 8.

† Art. Smalcald. Ad finem.

inquire into the ground of the dogma, that communion with the bishop of Rome is a necessary condition of salvation: they found it not in the early fathers, nor in Scripture: appealing from the so-called successors of the Apostles to the Apostles themselves, they demanded, but in vain, that the divine ordinance, appointing the bishop of Rome vicar of Christ upon earth, should be produced: and at length, feeling their ground firm, they pronounced the whole doctrine to be, as indeed it was, an impudent fabrication. They did not separate from the Romish Church, but they asserted the right of every national Church to regulate, independently of the bishop of Rome, its own affairs: on her part, Rome pronounced every Church which exercised this right to be cut off from Christ. This is now our relative position: we maintaining that we have only resumed rights which were always ours, though for a time they may have been permitted to lie in abeyance, Rome affirming that we have violated a divine ordinance.

It is not probable that the papal claims in their full extent will ever again be admitted by any nation which has once thrown off the yoke; the independence of national churches, one of the great truths the establishment of which we owe to the Reformation, being jealously asserted, even by those who, in other points, incline to the doctrinal system of Trent: but it must never be forgotten that the principle which governed the construction of the papal dogma—viz. the transmutation of points of order into divine laws—may be actively at work where the supremacy of the pope is denied. We must protest against the earlier, as well as the later, exemplifications of this principle; against episcopacy *jure divino*, as well as against the tridentine theory of the papacy. The Protestant will retain, where it has been handed down to him, that form of church polity which is sanctioned by apostolic precedent: he will require the clearest evidence of its being no longer fitted to secure the great ends of the Church, before he ventures to innovate upon it: but when he hears apostolic precedents exalted into divine laws, and made of immutable obligation, so that where there is no bishop, there is no church, and no sacraments; ritual and polity, and not the presence of the Spirit, being set forth as that wherein the true being of the Church lies; he will at once detect the presence of that noxious element which makes Romanism what it is. When claims of this kind are put forth, he will appeal to Scripture, and require that the covenanted connexion between the grace of Christ and any particular form of polity be thence proved. Nor will he consent to be deprived of

the liberty of testing, and, if need be, reforming existing ecclesiastical customs, by a reference to apostolical tradition—*i. e.* Scripture. A divinely prescribed polity and ritual, like that of Moses, cannot, without sacrilege, be altered; but no such sanction is claimed by the Apostles for their own regulations; much less can it be claimed for those of their uninspired successors. On the other hand, as long as the distinction between what is divine and what is human; between what is essential to the being and what may be necessary to the well-being of the Church is carefully observed, the Catholic Protestant—Catholic in the genuine sense of the term—will be as reluctant as his opponents needlessly to "break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority," or to "offend against the common order of the Church:" he will assign to historical Christianity its just value, as long as it is not employed to impose fetters where Scripture leaves us free. But when points of order are put forward as divine enactments, he will resist the pretension, well aware that it involves the essential principle of Romanism: he will protest, not so much against the practice or institution itself, which may or may not be a salutary one, as against the dogma sought to be connected with it.*

Section II.

THE ONENESS OF THE CHURCH.

Closely connected with, though distinct from, the attribute of internal, or organic, unity, is that of the oneness, or oneliness, of the Church, which, according to the plan laid down, is the next to be considered.

* Chemnitz well states the Protestant rule regarding rites and ceremonies:—"Ritus, qui Scripturæ consentanei sint, recte retineri, qui vero cum Scripturâ pugnant justo judicio, et nullâ temeritate, rejici et aboleri. Quod si de adiaphoris ritibus qui cum Scripturâ non pugnant, quæstio est, simplex et plana est responsio:—Si non *proponantur cum opinione necessitatis, cultus et meriti*, sed tantum ut ordini, decori, et ædificationi serviant, et cum Christianâ libertate non pugnent, posse de illis statui prout ecclesiæ videbitur conveniri."—Examen Conc. Trid. loc. ii. s. 8.

That there is but one holy Catholic Church is almost a self-evident proposition; two universal Churches being a contradiction in terms. Moreover, both Romanists and Protestants agree in the abstract proposition, that out of the Catholic Church there is, ordinarily, or by virtue of the covenanted promise of God, no salvation. Those who shall be saved are, in the ordinary course of things, added to the Church (Acts, ii. 47.). Neither party, again, denies that persons *may* be saved to whom the message of salvation has never been brought. For if, on the one hand, such persons must be pronounced "strangers to the covenants of promise," on the other, both recorded instances, such as that of Job, and certain general declarations of Scripture, encourage us to hope that the mercies of God may, in their exuberance, pass beyond the limits which He Himself has prescribed, and be extended to many to whom the way of salvation through Christ has not been explicitly declared. In all such cases, however, it is to be remembered that it is not "by," but *in* "the law, or sect, which every man professeth," that he is saved, if saved he be;* for "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved but the name of Christ:†" those, therefore, who, without the light of revelation, have been delivered from the consequences of the fall must have been so, not by virtue of the religion which they professed, if they did profess any, but by the merits of Christ imputed to them in some way accordant, doubtless, with the divine wisdom, but unknown to us. With respect to those to whom the Gospel has been explicitly propounded, the question admits of no doubt:—they reject it at their own everlasting peril.

No sooner, however, do we proceed to ask *what* is that Catholic Church out of which there is no salvation? than the fundamental difference between the Romanist and the Protestant conception of the Church comes into view, and begins to operate. Out of that Church, which is the body of which Christ is the Head, which consists of those who are in living union with Christ and are led by His Spirit, the Protestant readily admits that there is not, and cannot be, covenanted salvation. For the true Church consists of those who are in a state of salvation; and a state of salvation is the state of those who by faith in Christ are exonerated from the penalty, and emancipated from the power, of sin. This, however, is very far from being what the Romanist means by the exclusiveness of the Church. Since, in his view, the body of Christ is that

* See Art 18., with Burnet's remarks upon it. † Acts, iv. 12.

visible community which acknowledges the supremacy of the Roman Pontiff, the proposition in his mouth amounts to this:—that, beyond the pale of this visible body, there is, ordinarily speaking, no salvation; the federal mercies of God being absolutely limited to those in communion with the bishop of Rome. It matters not how sincere may be the faith which derives its nutriment from the very words of Christ and His Apostles, or how fruitful that faith may be in all the graces of the Spirit; if the individual in whom it appears to exist be not in communion with the see of Rome, he is, in theoretical strictness, cut off from Christ, and consigned to the uncovenanted mercies of God. On the other hand, however destitute a man may be of saving faith, how barren soever in the visible evidences of the indwelling of the Spirit, if only he be externally within the consecrated pale, he is a member of Christ, and, as such, a participator in the privileges of Christ's body (Hoc quidem bono non privantur (mali), ut hujus corporis membra esse desinant.—Cat. Rom. p. 1. c. 10.). Such are the conclusions to which the Romish theory, when fully carried out, leads. In this, however, as in other instances, that Christian feeling which no theory can wholly extinguish interposes to mitigate the rigour of the dogma; and various charitable pleas—such as that of invincible ignorance, &c.—have been devised, with the view of rendering it possible to believe that salvation may be had outside the pale of the Romish communion.

The readers of the early fathers will not need to be reminded that the doctrine of Rome upon this point is nothing but the mature development of principles which had long been germinating in the Church. The startling dogma that one visible Christian communion is the spiritual ark out of which there is no salvation required, as might be expected, centuries to bring it to maturity. It grew up in the following way:—The first contests in which the Church was engaged were with heretics rather than schismatics,—deniers of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, rather than violators of the Church's unity. Hence the early polemical writers—Irenæus and Tertullian—insist chiefly upon the historical continuity of *doctrine* in the chief churches from the Apostles' times downwards, and the contrariety therewith which the heretical novelties exhibited: a line of argument which, before the canon of Scripture was fixed, or easy access could be had to the inspired writers, it was both natural and allowable in them to adopt: they were perfectly justified in appealing from the subjective fancies (*αἱρέσεις*) of individuals, to the objective, historical, faith of the

Church, as it had been always held. In process of time the arena of strife changed; and the Church had to deal with communities which were schismatical rather than heretical, or professed essentially the same faith with the Catholic Church, while they renounced her communion. Such were the Novatian and the Donatist schisms, the former of which occurred at Rome while Cornelius was bishop of that Church, and Cyprian presided over the see of Carthage: the latter in northern Africa during the episcopate of Augustin. Neither of these sects appear to have denied any article of the common Catholic faith; and, what was still more embarrassing, they retained the same episcopal form of government which prevailed throughout Catholic Christendom. Novatian procured himself to be ordained bishop by the laying on of episcopal hands; while the Donatist bishops of Africa were a numerous and powerful body. The consequence of this change in the state of things was that Cyprian and Augustin — the two great founders of the Church system — were compelled to shift the argument from the ground of *doctrine* to that of *polity*, and polity not in the abstract merely, but as transmitted in a certain historical line: they were driven to maintain the position, not merely that there only where certain doctrines are held, or even a certain form of polity is retained, does that form of religious life which we call Christian exist, — for this would have left no distinction between them and their opponents who, equally with themselves, were orthodox and episcopal, — but that genuine Christianity is only to be found amongst those who, besides being orthodox and episcopal, were in communion with the Catholic bishop, — the bishop, that is, whose title rested upon an unbroken line of succession from the Apostles' times. By both these fathers this is affirmed in the strongest language. Some of their remarkable expressions in reference to schismatics will be hereafter cited: meanwhile the sum of their doctrine may be thus briefly stated: — To the Church — or, to speak in the concrete, to the Catholic bishop, who, in fact, is the Church personified (scire debes episcopum in ecclesiâ esse et ecclesiam in episcopo) * — has been committed the exclusive prerogative of dispensing forgiveness of sins, and the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, the Catholic episcopate being the sole organ through which the merits of Christ are applied to the souls of the faithful: consequently no one who is not in communion with the Catholic bishop can have any saving fellowship with Christ, or be

* Cyprian, Epist. 69. Ad Florent. Pup.

a partaker of Christ's Spirit. That which in the separatist bodies *appears* to be faith, or love, or holiness, is not really so: the graces of the Spirit *cannot* grow save within the one consecrated enclosure. It is not the *object* (Christ) upon which faith fixes that gives that faith its distinctively Christian character, but the communion in which it is exercised — viz. the Catholic Church. On this latter ground Cyprian rests his famous assertion, that he who suffers death for Christ's sake outside the pale of the Church has no claim to the title of Martyr. Cyprian, as is well known, held that the ordinances of the Gospel when administered by schismatics are wholly invalid, and that those, therefore, who had been baptized by persons in schism should, on their reconciliation with the Church, be re-baptized: this opinion found a strenuous and successful opponent in Augustin, who, however, while he maintains that the sacrament, wherever and by whomsoever administered, remains a sacrament because of its institution by Christ, and is therefore in no case to be repeated, is quite as decided as his predecessor in declaring it to be useless as regards salvation, while the person baptized continues in a state of schism. Those who are acquainted with the works of these fathers will be ready to bear witness that this is no exaggerated statement of their sentiments on this subject; so completely, even at that early period, had the life of the Church come to be identified, not with apostolicity of doctrine, but with the external transmission of a certain form of polity.

In proportion as the organization of the Church grew into form in the manner before described, so did the idea of its exclusiveness; and when at length the abstract notion of the unity of the Catholic episcopate had become clothed with flesh and blood in the person of the Roman pontiff, nothing more was needed than to apply the principles which Cyprian and Augustin had centuries before inculcated to the new development of the papacy, in order to arrive at the tridentine dogma,— that beyond the pale of the Roman obedience there is ordinarily no salvation. None of the distinctive doctrines of the church theory took its place more naturally in the dogmatical system of Trent.

The Protestant, with his views of the relation in which the polity of the Church stands to its true being, must reject not only the Romish, but the patristic idea of its oneness. That "where the Spirit of God is, there" and there alone "is the Church," is an obvious truism; the question is, by what external means does the Spirit of God work, from the presence of which, therefore, we may

infer His presence? The Protestant searches Scripture in vain for a covenanted connexion between episcopacy, or any other form of polity, and the grace of the Holy Spirit: he finds that the Church existed, nay, was "filled with the Holy Ghost," long before it possessed bishops, priests, and deacons. Two external means, and two only, he discovers to which grace is by covenant annexed, and which, in fact, were from the first instrumental in gathering in and building up the elect of God,—viz. the Word and the Sacraments: with these, therefore, the Protestant connects his idea of the exclusiveness of the Church, and contents himself with affirming that where the Word (in its fundamental verities at least) is not preached, and the sacraments not duly administered, there the Church of Christ is not. For the same reason, he places the apostolicity of the Church principally, though not exclusively, in the succession of doctrine. For the Holy Spirit, the divine administrator of the Christian economy, does not ordinarily work now, any more than he did at first, save through the Apostles' testimony and doctrine, which is nowhere to be found with certainty but in Holy Scripture. By the Apostolic doctrine it is that souls are regenerated; and by the same "sincere milk of the Word" they are nourished unto life eternal. In this sense it is that the Church "is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets," the living Word Himself "being the chief corner stone;"* while, by means of "evangelists, pastors, and teachers," "teaching" men "to observe all things whatsoever" Christ has "commanded,"† the spiritual edifice grows up into a holy temple to the Lord.

And thus we are brought back to the two Protestant notes of a Church,—the pure preaching of the Word and the due administration of the sacraments: only that now we view them under a somewhat different aspect from that under which they were formerly considered; we view them, not positively, as sufficient notes of a Church, but negatively, as a test, by the application of which we exclude certain communities from the title of Christian. It has already been observed that the pure preaching of the Word is an abstract idea, and that though one Church may in this respect be more or less pure than another, it does not cease to be a Church because on some points it holds erroneous doctrine: we cannot deny the title of a Church to any society of professing Christians which administers the sacraments, and teaches truth in fundamentals. But here the question arises, what are to be esteemed

* Ephes. ii. 20. † Matt. xxxviii. 20.

fundamentals in Christianity? or, to put it otherwise, what amount or species of error is to be considered as disentitling a society to be called a Church of Christ? We speak frequently of the main points of the Christian faith; what are these main points?

That some truths are necessary to be believed in order to salvation is plainly declared in Scripture. "He that believeth not shall be damned;" "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* but the name of Jesus Christ:—these solemn declarations place it beyond doubt that Christianity presents to men some specific form of faith, with the reception of which eternal life is connected. Nor can there be a more unpromising symptom in any Christian community, or individual, than a tendency to merge the distinctive peculiarities of the Christian system in natural religion, or to hold it a matter of indifference what section of the Christian world we belong to, provided we conform to the practical precepts of Scripture. An eclecticism of this kind betrays either a lack of earnest religious feeling, or an overweening confidence in the powers of human reason. Under the veil of fellow-feeling with all parties it too often conceals a supercilious contempt for the simple faith of the biblical Christian; whose contracted views, as they are called in the current phraseology of this school, may, it is said, suit the vulgar, but are not adapted to intellectual Christianity. To persons of this temper, St. Paul must appear in the light of a bigot when he pronounced an anathema against those who taught a different Gospel from that which he himself had preached, and declared that the error of the Galatian Church was incompatible with a saving interest in Christ.†

But while it is generally admitted that Christianity comprises certain articles of faith, without the reception of which no one—no church at least—can be called Christian, opinions differ widely respecting the means which we possess of determining what these articles are; or, in other words, of arriving at any fixed conclusion as to what are and what are not to be considered essential doctrines of the Gospel. At the very threshold of the question, we are met by protestations on the part of a certain school of Romanists (not that of Pascal and Fenelon, or even Bossuet and Bellarmin) against the whole proceeding, as presumptuous and rationalistic. To take upon ourselves, it is said, to determine the relative importance of the truths taught in Scripture, to attempt

* Mark, xvi. 16.; Acts, iv. 12. † Gal. ii. 5.; v. 2—4.

to reduce Christianity to "a few leading ideas," to speak of some doctrines of the Gospel as principal, and others as subordinate, ones, betrays a want of proper humility, as well as a forgetfulness of the divine origin of our faith. For the works of God are ever beyond our comprehension; and in any given instance, we can neither understand fully all the objects which He may have in view, nor pronounce a judgment upon the means necessary to secure them. Everything which forms part of revelation being important, to affirm of one doctrine, or fact, that it is more important than another, is to transgress the limits within which our inquiries should be confined.

The object aimed at by this reasoning is evident, — viz. to make it appear that the regulations of polity which Scripture contains occupy precisely the same level, as regards importance, with the doctrines which it reveals; — that, for example, we have no more reason to pronounce the doctrine of the Trinity, or that of the atonement, to be an essential part of Christianity, than we have to pronounce episcopacy to be so. More need not be said upon a line of argument so repulsive to the feelings of the Christian, and which, when recently brought forward amongst ourselves, excited universal and merited reprobation. No words, indeed, can adequately describe either the spiritual blindness or the reckless temerity of those who, in order to prop up an ecclesiastical theory, would run the risk of shaking the faith of thousands, and sacrifice Christianity itself to the interests of a party. The erroneous supposition upon which the whole argument is founded will be presently noticed.

Even among those, however, who do admit that some doctrines are more essential than others (and it is probably but a few that are prepared seriously to maintain that no distinction of this kind is to be made), the rules which have been proposed for discriminating between essentials and non-essentials are extremely various. The Romish divines, for the most part, as might be expected, make the decision of the Church the rule of fundamentals. Some, like Chillingworth,* regard it as sufficient if parties agree in holding the inspiration and sufficiency of Scripture; but this rule is obviously inadequate for its purpose, for it is not the *volume* of Scripture, but the truths therein contained, that constitutes the faith of the Church: the Church held the essential truths of the Gospel before the New Testament Scriptures were written. Other

* Religion of Protestants, &c.

rules, proposed by different writers, will be found in Waterland's discourse upon this subject: the last-mentioned writer's definition of fundamentals is, the doctrines which are necessarily connected with the Christian covenant. A covenant, he observes, implies seven things:—a founder (God); a party covenanted with (man); the charter of foundation (Scripture); a mediator (Christ); certain conditions (repentance and holiness); aids or means (sacraments, &c.); and sanctions (the final judgment):—under one or another of these heads he conceives every essential doctrine of the Gospel may find a place.

It would be a strange thing if the settlement of the question were really so difficult a thing as one would think it to be from a perusal of the discussions of theologians upon this subject. For since Christianity is not an esoteric system, intended only for the initiated few, but emphatically a popular religion, and since Scripture, the authentic record of the facts and doctrines upon which the religion rests, was originally addressed to, and is evidently intended to be a manual for, plain and unlettered readers, it seems inconsistent with all we know of the nature of God to suppose that He would require, as necessary to salvation, faith in the Gospel, without at the same time furnishing us with sufficient means of ascertaining what the substance of the Gospel is. The obligation to believe presupposes that the subject matter of faith has been sufficiently revealed. And has it not been so, in point of fact? Has not the candid inquirer (and it is admitted that none else is likely to succeed in the search) abundant means of satisfying himself what is to be regarded as essential and immutable, and what accidental and mutable, in Christianity? In the following observations, which make no pretence of exhausting the subject, some of the chief lines of argument which are open to the inquirer, and from the convergence of which in respect to certain heads of doctrine the importance of these may be inferred, will be briefly pointed out.

There are two sources of information which, in an inquiry of this kind, we are not only permitted, but bound, to consult,—the testimony of the Church, and the testimony of Scripture: from the former we learn what Christians actually believe, from the latter we gather what they are bound to believe. These are the means divinely appointed to lead us to the knowledge of Christ; and though they differ widely in authoritative value, with neither of them can we safely dispense. The voice of the Church, when it occupies its proper place,—when regarded, that is, not as an inde-

pendent source of revelation, but as an expression of the faith of that body of Christ in which His Spirit, the same Spirit who inspired the sacred authors, dwells, and which appeals for proof of its faith to Scripture, must ever possess great value in the eyes of the Christian; and is, in fact, by the appointment of divine providence, the first instrument of our initiation in the mysteries of the Gospel. Now can it be said with any truth that from neither of these sources can we collect what are to be considered the fundamentals of the Christian faith?

With respect to the witness of the Church, it is notorious that the fact is otherwise. The best answer to those who tell us that Christians cannot, and may not, discriminate between essentials and non-essentials is to draw their attention to the matter of fact that the Church has ever done, and, at this day, is doing so. The doctrines which she feels to be essential to her life she has not perhaps set forth in a formal and systematic manner; but she has declared them unequivocally to all who can distinguish between the main stream of true Christianity in every age and the infusions of error which may from time to time have mingled in it. In the first place, we possess an exposition of the Church's faith in the three ancient creeds — the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian — which, to this day, constitute the bond of union between the Reformed and the Romish churches. In these the Church has expressed her belief in opposition to certain leading heresies; and one of them — the Apostle's Creed — she has ever employed as in itself a sufficient test of the catechumen's fitness for the sacrament of baptism. A moment's inspection, indeed, of these formularies suffices to show that they were never intended to be a complete catalogue of fundamentals: for, on the other hand, they contain particulars which are confessedly not essential to the integrity of Christian doctrine, and, on the other, they omit some leading doctrines altogether (as, for instance, the doctrine of justification by faith): still, as far as they go, they must, from the circumstances under which they were framed, and the use that has ever been made of them, be presumed to contain doctrines which, in the judgment of the Church universal, belong to the foundation of the Christian faith. And it will be observed that they chiefly consist of a statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the office which each of the divine persons discharges in the work of redemption. Then, again, we have what may be called the floating sentiment or mind of the Church, not declared formally, as in the creeds, but scattered here and there, in books, in sermons, or

in conversation. No one can peruse the writings of eminent Christians, whether of ancient or of modern times; no one can listen to the general expression of Christian feeling, without perceiving that after all it is a few cardinal points that constitute the life and soul of Christianity: at least in the estimation of those who profess to have found it efficacious to salvation. A consciousness of sin, and, through sin, of estrangement from God, and a consciousness of redemption from the guilt and power of sin through Christ; — these are the fundamental elements of Christian experience, and necessarily determine the relative importance which the Christian assigns to the mass of facts brought before him in Scripture. For thus, whatever Scripture declares respecting the person and work of Christ, the means of union with Him, or the nature of the redemption purchased by Him, must be esteemed by Christians, whether rightly or wrongly, as essentials of the Gospel.

Against facts of this kind, which depend upon the direct consciousness of the renewed mind, abstract arguments are of no avail; of no more avail than the celebrated demonstration of the non-existence of motion, against the convictions of him who arose and walked. To all reasonings which would persuade her that she knows not what the vital truths of the Gospel are, the Church replies, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."* Christianity is not primarily a system of doctrines, but a life in Christ; and its truth must be *felt* before it can be properly apprehended.

Without dwelling longer upon this topic, we may remark the strange inconsistency of those who profess to lay great weight upon the authority of the Church in matters of faith, and yet affirm that the Church cannot distinguish what are the essential articles of the faith. This is, indeed, referring us to a blind guide, or, what is nearly equivalent, a guide who is unacquainted with the road to be traversed, and can neither inform the traveller what dangers he is to avoid, or which, of the many paths that may present themselves to him, conducts to his destination. If the Church cannot tell us what she esteems to be heresy, and what a venial error, she is worse than useless as an instructress in divine truth, and we must look around for some other guide. The Protestant, at least, cannot consent so to lower the witnessing

* 1 John, i. 3.

function of the communion of saints considered as, next and subordinately to Scripture, the repository of truth; cannot so reduce the Church of Christ to the level of the earlier dispensation of the law. And this leads us to notice the erroneous supposition upon which the whole of the reasoning in question is founded; which is nothing but a particular application of the fundamental principle of Romanism, — that Christianity is a republication of the law of Moses. For, true it is, that the law dealt with its disciples as "children in understanding," which, indeed, they were: it prescribed a burdensome ceremonial, the import of which the early Jews, at least, did not comprehend, and of the relative importance of the parts of which they were, therefore, no judges. Of a service which was not "a reasonable" one, no one could venture to say that one portion was more important than another; any more than the bearer of a system of ciphers to which he does not possess the key, could safely take upon himself to expunge certain of them as immaterial to the subject-matter of the message with which he is intrusted. To this state of spiritual childhood the reasoning in question would bring back Christians. It treats them as destitute of spiritual discernment; as still behind the veil, instead of "beholding with open face the glory of the Lord" in Christ Jesus; and, consequently, as unable to discriminate between what does, and what does not, vitally affect their fellowship with Christ. That this is not the light in which Scripture regards Christians it is superfluous to observe. An intuitive perception of the relative magnitude of objects, whether in the material or spiritual world, is the proper prerogative of those who, as having emerged from childhood, have their "senses exercised to discern" such relations.

But the Church refers for proof of the genuine Christian character — that is, the apostolicity of the faith which she professes — to Holy Scripture, which is the authentic standard by which she tries "the spirits whether they be of God," and also, it must be presumed, her authority for assigning a greater importance to some doctrines, or rather some facts, contained in Scripture than to others. For it must ever be borne in mind that the doctrines of the Gospel are founded upon certain historical facts, of which those doctrines are the inspired explanation; a peculiarity this which distinguishes Christianity from all false religions. In turning, then, to Scripture with the view of gaining further light upon the point under discussion, we have, in the first place, to remark that what has just been said respecting the witness of the Church

applies here also. For, in one point of view, Scripture is nothing but Christian experience supernaturally secured from error; the inspired messengers of Christ having undergone the same conflict which we do, and been saved by the same faith by which we are saved. Now, can any one read the inspired writings without perceiving that, in the estimation of the Apostles, salvation, which is the proper end and scope of the Gospel, is specially connected with the reception of certain truths, while it is not so with others? Is it really the case that Scripture places everything which it records exactly on the same level, so that we cannot tell whether the institution of deaconesses, for example, be not as essential a part of Christianity as the incarnation of Christ?

"Other foundation," says St. Paul, "can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* Christ, the eternal Son in our nature, fulfilling the law for us, and for us suffering its penalty, and so opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers, is the fundamental fact of the Gospel. To believe the Apostles' testimony concerning Christ,—viz. that God was in Him, "reconciling the world unto Himself," and that, the work of redemption being accomplished, God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places,—brings with it salvation; for the faith which receives these inspired declarations both obliterates the guilt and emancipates the heart from the power of sin. Accordingly, around the person and work of Christ, and on the supposition of the existence of living faith in Him, the Apostles arrange in concentric circles all the mysteries which they reveal, all the duties which they inculcate. By Him they profess to live spiritually; to Him they trace up grace of every kind; and the feelings of trust and love, the acts of adoration and worship, which it would be blasphemy in one creature to cherish towards, or render to, another, they are found exhibiting towards the man Christ Jesus. If the Socinian, then, should urge either that the divinity of Christ is not taught or implied in Scripture, or that it is not a fundamental doctrine, we have but to bid him examine whether the experience of his spiritual life, in reference to Christ, accords with that of the Apostles.

But, besides this indirect evidence, which, it is admitted, can be fully appreciated only by those whose Christian instincts are in harmony with those of the Apostles, Scripture gives us no small direct aid in determining the fundamentals of the Gospel. The

* 1 Cor. iii. 11.

remark that Scripture presents us with no summary of the chief articles of the Christian faith, like the so-called Apostles' creed,* just as it is in the main, is not to be admitted without some degree of limitation. Whatever may be the full import of the form prescribed by our Lord for the administration of baptism,—to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—that is, to be a recognized member of a Christian Church,—must, at the least, imply faith in the existence of the three Divine Persons, or a belief of the doctrine of the Trinity. Such passages, also, as 1 Cor. xv. 1—4., part of which is evidently incorporated in the Apostles' creed; Ephes. iv. 4—6., where the fundamental unities of the Church are enumerated; Heb. vi. 1, 2., which contains several of "the principles of the doctrine of Christ;" and 1 Tim. iii. 16., are, in this point of view, very important ones: taken together they go a long way towards furnishing the whole substance of the earliest creed. It is, however, not so much in its positive as in its exclusive declarations that Scripture provides us with data for the determination of the present question: not so much, that is, in what it states to be of the essence of Christian faith, as in what it pronounces to be incompatible with the truth of the Gospel. The reader of Scripture, who has not turned his attention particularly to this point, will be surprised to find how many doctrines there are which, from the language in which the opposite error is denounced, we may at once infer to be fundamental. To mention some:—we thus gather from 1 John, ii. 23., that the divinity, and from 1 John, iv. 3., that the incarnation, of Christ are fundamental articles of Christian faith: from 1 Cor. xv. we draw the same conclusion respecting the resurrection of the body: and St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians teaches us that to deny the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law is to fall from grace.

Another important line of argument may be derived from the two divinely appointed ordinances of the Gospel—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Besides being, in conjunction with the Word, covenanted channels of grace, those ordinances are intended to symbolise and teach, by means of representation and commemoration, the doctrines of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and the atonement of Christ: they are, to adopt the language of Gerhard, a verbum visibile. Now, when we bear in mind that one characteristic distinction of the Christian, as compared with the Mosaic,

* See Whateley's Essays, 1st Series, Essay 6.

economy is the absence of symbol and ritual, the substitution of what is intellectual and spiritual for what is typical and visible, we can have little difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that the reason why the two doctrines just mentioned, besides being taught in Scripture, are also visibly represented by typical and commemorative ordinances, is that they are of paramount importance in the Christian scheme. Vice versâ, the essential character of the doctrines of the new birth and of the atonement being admitted, we may hence infer the importance of the two rites in which they are visibly expressed; and, on this ground, as well as on that of their being the only Gospel rites to which grace is, by covenant, annexed, assign to the Christian Sacraments a place which no other ordinances can be permitted to usurp.

It is in this way, by the combination of various considerations, which, like the evidences of Christianity, confirm, and throw cross-lights upon, each other, that we determine, in general, what are to be esteemed the fundamentals of the Gospel, and what is to be placed in a different category; and, consequently, what differences of opinion may exist between communities, professing to be Christian, without cutting them off from the Church of Christ. If, after all, we can neither furnish a complete catalogue of fundamentals, nor exactly define the boundary line between truth and error, it must be remembered that the whole subject is one which, from its nature, belongs rather to the sphere of the moral, or, more properly, the spiritual, judgment, than to that of the understanding; and that to strike the just mean between unduly multiplying essentials on the one hand, and, on the other, abandoning truths apart from which Christianity becomes merely an improved version of natural religion, belongs to a wisdom which the Church, indeed, should ever be aiming at, and which she must believe she is in some measure in possession of; but which it would be too much to say she has as yet perfectly attained.

It only remains to observe that the exclusiveness of the Church, in the sense in which it has been here considered, has reference, not to individuals, but to societies. It would be in the highest degree presumptuous to pronounce positively what measure of Christian faith is necessary to the salvation of a particular individual; so manifold are the differences of opportunity and natural capacity which must here be taken into account, and must check any rashness of decision upon our part. The question only relates to what Waterland calls fundamentals "in the abstract," or, the terms of Church communion: we profess no more than to

determine whether a society, calling itself Christian, deserves that title or not. The patristic, or Romish, theory which makes polity instead of doctrine the essential note of a Church, leads, among other evils, to the assumption of a power of pronouncing upon the state of individuals; and while the Protestant only ventures to say that that is not a true Church where neither is the pure Word of God preached nor the Sacraments duly administered, the Tridentine fathers, following in the track which Augustine had marked out for them, pronounce every individual not in communion with the Roman pontiff to be out of the pale of salvation.

Section III.

THE SANCTITY OF THE CHURCH.

That a somewhat different conception of the sanctity of the body of Christ—the only attribute that remains to be considered—should be entertained by Romanists and Protestants respectively, is, from the principles of each party, inevitable. Since, according to the Romish definition, the Catholic Church is a visible corporation, having its true being in its outward characteristics, and comprehending, according to the idea, both the evil and the good, the sanctity which belongs to such a body can, of course, be a merely external one, or a sanctity which does not necessarily imply the *personal* holiness of those who compose the body. The statements of the Romish Catechism to this effect have been already adduced. The Church, we are told, is called holy, because, as a body, it is separated, in the same sense in which the vessels of the tabernacle were, or, the Catechism might have added, as the Jewish people was, to the service of God, the instruments and signs of separation being a profession of the true faith and the sacrament of baptism; because in the Church the *means* of sanctity, the sacraments, &c. are to be found; and because Christ, the Head of the body, is holy. Such, according to the doctrine of Rome, is the only sanctity which is predicable of the body of Christ; the individual members of which, therefore, may be, for anything to the contrary in the theory, destitute of per-

sonal holiness. For we must not suffer ourselves to be misled by the ambiguity of some of the expressions of the Catechism respecting the union of the Church with Christ, from which we should naturally infer that she must be under the dominion of Christ's spirit. By those who "believe and have been baptized into Christ" are meant, not true believers, but all who, whatever may be their inward state, profess the Christian faith and receive the sacrament externally. Hence, as this is all that is necessary to make men true members of the true Church, the latter may, according to the theory, consist of such as the Apostle had in view when he declared of certain who bore the Christian name that they were "the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things;" * the characters of whom Augustin says that cum gemitu intus tolerantur. It is only their instinctive Christian feeling which has withheld the Romish theologians from openly maintaining this revolting doctrine.

If internal — that is, real — sanctity be, in the eyes of the Romanist, a separable accident — an opus supererogationis — with the Protestant it is, on the contrary, an essential characteristic of the body of Christ. He cannot conceive such a thing as a union with the Head which is not, and may never have been, productive of any sanctifying effects: a branch of a tree, though it may be now decaying, or even dead, must once have partaken of the sap, and given evidence that it did so. Indeed, the statements of the Romish theologians on this point carry with them their own refutation. Affirming, as they do rightly, that the holiness of the members is a consequence of their union with the Head, from whom all holiness is derived, they had only to inquire further in *what* sense is the Head holy? for it will be admitted that there must be a congruity, if not in degree, yet in kind, between the holiness of the Head and that of the members. This would have led them to see that, since the holiness of Christ the Head consists in actual freedom from all sin, that of the members must consist, at least, in deliverance from the dominion of sin.

Further observations in support of the Protestant doctrine upon this point seem to be unnecessary: for all that has been previously urged in support of the position that the true idea of the Church is, that it is a community of those in whom the Spirit of God dwells, goes also to prove that the proper sanctity of the Church

* Phil. iii. 18, 19.

is its internal sanctity, apart from which the external acts or signs of consecration lose all their value. They only are in Christ, in the full sense of that expression, who receive from him quickening grace; and they who receive quickening, receive at the same time sanctifying, grace. It may, however, be proper, with the view of obviating objections, to remark that, in maintaining that the sanctity of the true Church is a real and not a nominal one, it is not meant that it is, or ever can be, in this life, perfect: at best, it is but an approximation to the perfect standard exhibited in Christ. It is not, however, on that account the less a real, present, work of the Spirit. When the Apostle describes the Church as being "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, holy and without blemish," he speaks, indeed, rather of what it will be than of what it actually is; but it must never be forgotten that its future state of perfection is but the consummation of a work which is begun here. In a real, therefore, and important sense the Apostle's language is applicable to the Church even in its present condition: it describes what she will be by virtue of what she is; what the seed of holiness now implanted will issue in hereafter: it describes what even now she aims at, though she can never say that she has attained, or is already perfect. For if the sanctity of Christ's members be imperfect, it is yet continually progressive. It possesses, like all life, a principle of growth; and the "new man," after the analogy of the human body, advances through the several stages of infancy, youth, and manhood, until "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" is in the life to come attained.* In proportion as spiritual illumination, and power of holiness, increase, the discrepancy between the Christian's present state and the ideal which is before his mind becomes more vividly felt; and this feeling, again, prompts him to fresh efforts; and thus, through the reciprocal action of obedience upon knowledge and knowledge upon obedience, "the path of the just" becomes "like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And who can affirm that this progressive advancement in sanctification is to terminate with the present life? In a negative sense, indeed, the Christian will, in a future state, be at once perfected; he will be, that is, completely released from "the body of sin and death" which he here bears about with him: but, as regards positive advancement in holiness, there may be before him a field of pro-

* 1 Pet. ii. 2.; 1 Cor. iii. 1.; 1 John, ii. 13.; Ephes. iv. 14.

gress as unlimited as eternity itself, and the measure of sanctity with which he commences his career above may bear but the same proportion to what it is destined to become, as his present attainments do to that incipient stage of his heavenly existence.

Since the proper sanctity of Christ's body is, according to the foregoing observations, not corporate merely, but personal, the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians, it is, of course, *as such*, invisible: we have, in the next place, then, to inquire in what manner it gives visible evidence of its existence.

The Spirit of God, by purifying the fountain, makes the streams sweet; so that where the heart is truly under the influence of divine grace, the fruits of the spirit will be, in greater or less measure, exhibited. In this respect, the Church of Christ ought to be, and in fact is, whenever, by the agency of persecution, purging off from her the foreign elements with which she is in external conjunction, she is brought to correspond more closely with the idea, "a city set upon an hill" which "cannot be hid." The history of modern civilization is a record of the mighty practical influence exerted upon a world which naturally lies in wickedness by the measure of visible sanctity, imperfect as it is, which the Church is enabled to bring forth. It is a perilous mode of reasoning, and likely to lead to universal scepticism, to maintain, for the sake of theoretical consistency, that the visible fruits of the Spirit do not possess a sufficiently distinctive character to enable us to pronounce where they are and where they are not: not to mention that the sin of denying the evident operation of the Holy Spirit is spoken of by our Lord in terms far too awful not to make us tremble at the thought of verging towards it. The fruits of the Spirit, whether they be produced within our own inclosure or beyond it, are always the same, and always to be recog nized; otherwise our Lord would never have given us the simple test whereby we are to distinguish false from true prophets,— "by their fruits ye shall know them." He does not deem it necessary to explain further what is good, and what evil, fruit; for He supposes his hearers not to be destitute of common sense, and ordinary moral perceptions; He presumes that they are capable of distinguishing between the works of God and the works of Satan. If men profess not to be able to do so, they simply profess that they have neither conscience nor moral sense. In short, to maintain that we cannot distinguish the genuine fruits of the Spirit from those which appear to be so, but are not, is on a par with maintaining that we cannot be sure that the miracles of

Christ were the work of God because Satan also may produce supernatural effects. The practical holiness of Christians, wherever it appear, cannot, we may be sure, come of what is evil.

One visible manifestation, then, of the sanctity of the Church is the holy walk and conversation of individual Christians: but there is another, and more formal, mode in which she professes herself to be holy, and that is, by the exercise of discipline. The personal holiness of the Christian is a property of the individual, not of the society as such, hence a professing Christian society, however large a proportion of holy men it may contain, does not predicate of itself that it is a part of Christ's holy Church as long as it exercises no formal official act, implying that assumption. The exercise of discipline is the true and legitimate expression of the sanctity of a visible Church, considered as a society. Hence the great importance of discipline. It is not merely that the absence of it operates injuriously upon the tone and standard of piety within the Church; it affects the claim of the society as such to be a legitimate member of the visible Church Catholic. A Christian society which should openly profess to dispense with discipline, and tolerate, on principle, open and notorious evil doers within its pale, would thereby renounce its title to one of the essential attributes of the Church: it would sever all ostensible connexion between itself and the true Church, of which sanctity is an inseparable property: in short, it would unchurch itself. For every particular church is so called on the supposition of its being a manifestation, more or less true, of the one holy Church, —the body of Christ. It is on this ground that some of the Protestant confessions—*e. g.* the Scotch, and our own homilies*—make discipline one of the essential notes of a true Church: nor does it appear they are far wrong in so doing. The power of ecclesiastical correction is one of the few which have been conferred upon each Christian society by Christ Himself (Matt. xviii. 17.); it is that which distinguishes a Church from a mere casual assemblage of Christians; as indeed it is evident that a community which does not possess the power of admonishing, and, in the last resort, expelling an unworthy member, cannot be called a society in any proper sense of the word. It is true that ecclesiastical censures, being applicable only to overt transgressions, partake of the imperfection which belongs to the Church in all its visible organization and corporate acts: secret unbelievers, or

* Second part of the Sermon for Whitsunday.

hypocrites, must be left to the judgment of the great day. Still, imperfect though the process be, each church is bound, by casting out of its communion those whose vicious lives prove that they have already excluded themselves from the invisible communion of saints, to testify, as far as it can do, that it is, according to the idea, a part of that communion, and, therefore, a holy society. How essential to the idea of a Church the exercise of discipline is, may be seen from the embarrassing contrarieties between theory and practice which the virtual suspension of it in the Church of England is constantly occasioning.

That excommunication, and ecclesiastical censures of every kind, should ever be carefully disjoined from civil penalties it is needless to remark. To call in the secular power to enforce spiritual censures, or to attach temporal penalties to ecclesiastical offences, is to lose sight entirely of the spiritual nature of the Gospel dispensation, and to obscure and debase the true functions of the Church. The history of the inquisition is the best comment upon the tendencies of this evil principle, which took its rise naturally from that identification of the kingdom of Christ with the kingdoms of this world which the papacy presents. Unhappily it survived the partial destruction of the papal power at the reformation; and it is only in recent times that even Protestants have come to recognize the sin, and the fruitlessness, of all attempts to infringe the inalienable rights of conscience. There can be little doubt that the association in men's minds between excommunication and civil disabilities has materially contributed to prevent, or to retard, in our own church the restoration, so much desired by all parties, of a power of separating from her communion those whose lives are in open contrariety with their Christian profession. In purely spiritual censures, when seen in their true light, there is quite enough to make them formidable to those who have any proper feeling of the value of Christian privileges: they can well dispense with an adventitious aid, which, while it professes to support and strengthen, does, in reality, by corrupting the idea, rob them of their proper power.

After all that a church can do in this respect, there will still remain in outward communion with it many who are not inwardly sanctified,—the tares and the bad fish, which the Lord Himself alone can separate. The Montanist, and Novatian, and subsequently the Donatist, schism sprang from a principle true in itself, but pushed beyond the limits of sobriety. They were caused by the sense, peculiarly strong in earnest minds, of the discrepancy

between the church as it is and as it ought to be, as regards the attribute of sanctity; and proceeded upon the erroneous expectation, that, by increasing the rigour of discipline, and denying reconciliation to the lapsed, the visible church might be brought to be identical with the mystical body of Christ. A vain attempt, which recoiled upon its authors, and introduced greater disorders, and even greater laxity of practice, than those which it was intended to remedy. Augustin's account of the moral state of the Donatists,* its trustworthiness being presumed, conveys a warning example to all who would attempt to establish a perfectly pure church upon earth.

In contending against his Donatist adversaries, Augustin makes a very near approach to the Protestant idea of the invisible Church. It would seem, both from his and Cyprian's passing notices of the existing state of things, that the exercise of discipline had in the Catholic Church, become much relaxed; many of openly vicious life being tolerated in her communion, lest, if discipline were enforced, they should withdraw and join the ranks of schism. When urged by the Donatists to explain how a church which comprised within its pale such unsanctified members could be called "holy," Augustin had recourse to a distinction, not between the visible and the true Church, but in the mode of belonging to the visible Church, which, according to him, is twofold,—real and apparent. The wicked, he says, "*seem* to be in the Church, but are not."† "Whether they *seem* to be within the Church, or are openly separate from it, matters not, that which is flesh is flesh: whether they remain in the threshing floor in their natural sterility, or through temptation, as by the wind, are scattered from it, that which is chaff remains chaff. He who is in a state of carnal obduracy, though he may (externally) belong to the congregation of saints, is yet ever separate from the unity of that church which is without spot or wrinkle."‡ Again: "they are not, as Cyprian says, 'devoted to the Church' who live contrary to the commands of Christ; nor are they in any way to be esteemed members of that Church, which He (Christ) so washes with water by the Word, as that he may present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

* "Africa electa est, ubi purgata massa consisteret, cæteram omnem terram palea separata vestiret. Unde ergo tantæ turbæ circumcellionum? Unde ergo tantæ turbæ ebriosorum, et innuptarum sed non incorruptarum innumerabilia stupra feminarum? Unde tanta turba raptorum, avarorum, fœneratorum?—Non sunt ista? Anne hoc triticum est? væ impudentissimæ negationi, si apud se ista non esse; væ sceleratissimæ perversitati, si frumenta esse responderent."—Cont. Epist. Par. lib. iii. s. 18.

† De Bap. Cont. Don. lib. i. s. 26. ‡ Ibid. lib. i. s. 26.

But since not to be a member of a church is not to be in it, it follows that they are not in the church of which it is said, 'my dove is one, she is the only one of her mother.' Or can any one assert that they are members of this dove who renounce the world in words but not in deeds."* Again: "it is the dove that retains, the dove that remits (sins); unity retains, unity remits. But the reconciling power of this unity is only in the good; either those who are actually spiritual, or who, by peaceful obedience, are progressing to spiritual things; in the evil it is not, whether they excite tumults in a state of schism, or are tolerated with groaning within."† Once more, in a still more striking passage: "whereas in the Song of Solomon the church is described as 'a garden inclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed,' I dare not understand this save of the just and the holy; not of the covetous, and fraudulent, plunderers and usurers, drunkards or envious persons, who nevertheless had, as we learn from Cyprian's Epistles, a common baptism with the righteous."‡

To the Donatist objection, that by this doctrine he was making *two* Churches, Augustin replies that this was not the case; he was only distinguishing between two different conditions, or states, of one and the same church, — its condition in this world, and its condition in the life to come. Here it is mixed up with evil men, from whom it will be purified in its future state. "The Catholics proved the agreement of Scripture with itself, by observing that those passages which speak of the Church as having evil men mingled in it, signify its condition in the present world; while those which speak of it as without any admixture of evil, denote what it is to be hereafter in eternity."§ "Concerning the two churches, the Catholics refuted the Donatist calumnies by explaining that they did not mean that the church which now contains wicked men within its pale is different from the kingdom of God in which there is no admixture of evil, but that the same one holy Church is now in one condition, and hereafter will be in another; now has evil men in its communion, and hereafter" (*i. e.* when Christ finally separates the evil from the good) "will be without them."‖

* De Bap. Cont. Don. lib. iv. s. 4.

† Ibid. lib. iii. s. 23. "Columba tenet, columba dimittit." Columba, "the dove," is the usual term with Augustin for what Protestants would call the invisible Church.

‡ Ibid. lib. v. s. 38. A multitude of other passages to the same effect might be collected from Augustin's works.

§ Brev. Coll. d. iii. s. 16. ‖ Ibid. s. 20.

The passages cited exhibit a remarkable approximation to the statements of the Protestant formularies; and it may appear difficult to discover a difference between Augustin's doctrine and that of his disciples of the reformation. Nevertheless there is a distinction between them. It is this: while Augustin, led by Scripture and the instinct of a spiritual mind, speaks of the righteous as constituting (to use his own metaphor) "the soul of the church," —the true and proper part of it (for, as he says, "that is not the body of Christ which shall not reign with Christ eternally"), he yet views the wicked as being also, after their manner, true members of the mystical body of Christ; members, not in the same sense indeed in which the righteous are, but still real members: that is, the Church is, according to him, a visible institution to which both the evil and the good equally belong. In the following passage of Bellarmin, framed from Augustin's writings, the theory of that father is well expressed:—"Some belong both to the soul and the body of the Church" (the "soul" being the inward work of the Spirit), "and thus are in union with Christ both outwardly and inwardly, and are most perfectly members of the Church: some, again, belong to the soul and not to the body, as pious catechumens; and, lastly, some" (the wicked) "are of the body and not of the soul."*

These last are evidently, according to Augustin's view, real members of the body of Christ: and here is the true point of distinction between his doctrine and that of the reformers. The idea of the Church is not the same to each. According to Augustin the body of Christ is a visible community, external communion with which is indispensable to salvation, but of which men may be members without being inwardly sanctified by the Spirit; according to the teaching of the reformers, it is an invisible body, the members of which are all in saving union with Christ. The Protestant affirms, not as Augustin does, that "the wicked are the least perfect members of Christ's body," but, that the wicked, though they may be in external communion with a local church, are not, in any sense, members of the mystical body of Christ. This apparently unimportant difference involves the essential point in dispute; as may be gathered from the fact that Bellarmin, and other Romish writers, while they strenuously contend against the genuine Protestant doctrine, make no scruple to adopt Augustin's views on this point. They affirm, and justly, that the question is, not

* De Eccles. mil. c. 2.

concerning more or less perfect church-membership, but concerning the minimum of qualification requisite to constitute a man a member of Christ's body;* and, as Augustin would have done, they determine it to be an external profession of faith, and an external participation in the Sacraments, it being a matter of indifference whether internal grace be present or not.

To attempt to discuss the numerous questions which might be raised respecting the mode of administering discipline, or the various degrees of it, would be inconsistent with the scope of a work which professes only to illustrate general principles. An opportunity of noticing one point of inquiry of some importance — viz. with whom does the ultimate right of exercising discipline rest, the whole congregation consisting of people and pastors, or the pastors alone? — will occur hereafter.

* De Eccles. mil. c. 2.

BOOK III.

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THAT the Christian ministry, considered in the abstract, is of divine origin, is affirmed not less by Protestants than by Romanists. With the following statements of the Confession of Augsburgh and the first Helvetic Confession, all the Protestant confessions will be found to agree:—"That we may attain to saving faith, the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the Sacraments, as instruments, the Holy Spirit, the author of faith, is given. They—*i. e.* the Protestants—condemn the Anabaptists, whose opinion it is that the Holy Spirit is given to men apart from the external Word."* "God has always employed ministers to establish and govern his Church; He employs them now, and will do so as long as there is a Church upon earth. The origin, therefore, institution, and office, of Christian ministers are from God himself. God could, indeed, by an immediate exercise of his power, gather a Church out of mankind; but he chooses rather to deal with men through the ministry of men."† That, as the clergy alone are not the Church, so that is not a Church which has no pastors (*χωρὶς τούτων ἐκκλησία οὐ καλεῖται*), is a principle admitted on both sides. It is only thus far, however, that the opposite parties find themselves on common ground; for when the further questions arise, how is it that the ministerial function comes into existence, and is perpetuated in the Church; and what is the relation in which those invested with that function stand to the other members of a Christian society? grave differences of view will be found to exist between them. It is, in fact, on these two points, the former of which relates to what is commonly called the doctrine of the apostolical succession, the latter to the powers of the clerical body, that the controversy between Romanists and Protestants mainly hinges.

* Conf. Aug. Art. 5. † Conf. Hel. Prim. c. 18.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGIN AND PERPETUATION OF THE MINISTERIAL FUNCTION.

THE apostolicity of the Church is an attribute which belongs to it as a *Christian* society; for no community can establish its claim to the title of Christian unless there be a substantial agreement between its doctrines and institutions, and those of the inspired persons to whom Christ delivered a commission to establish His Church upon earth. What constitutes a true derivation from the Apostles, and in what manner the latter still preside in every society which has a valid claim to the title of Christian;—upon these points differences of opinion may exist: but upon the necessity of an Apostolical succession, and the perpetuity of Apostolic government in the Church, in *some sense* of the words, all sections of orthodox Christianity—certainly the Protestant and the Romish Churches—are agreed.

It has already been observed, that while the Protestant makes the essential point of connexion with the Apostles to consist in the succession of doctrine, the Romanist regards the Apostolicity of the Church as mainly consisting in the visible succession of a ministry derived from the Apostles; the opposition in this, as in other points of the controversy, being not absolute, but relative. But the phrase "Apostolicity of ministry" itself admits of a twofold meaning: it may signify either that a certain form of Church polity *resembles* that instituted by the Apostles, or that in a certain line of succession, and in that alone, certain spiritual powers supposed to be essential to the validity of ministerial acts, have been transmitted from the Apostles, the first possessors of those powers. An instance or two will serve to make this distinction clear. During the continuance of the Donatist schism, there were Donatist and Catholic episcopal churches, the form of polity adopted by the sectaries being identical with that of the body from which they separated: consequently, the episcopal form of Church government being presumed to be the Apostolical one, the Donatist churches might, on account of their retention of that form, be called Apostolical: but they were not so in the other sense of the word, for they had broken the continuity of succession; they could not trace the title of their bishops in an uninter-

rupted line up to the Apostles: and therefore, according to Cyprian and Augustin, they had not amongst them those spiritual sacerdotal powers which those fathers supposed to be handed down only in the one direct line of succession. Similarly, if any of the sects around us were to abandon their present polity, and in its place to establish a threefold ministry, corresponding in functions and in title with our bishops, presbyters, and deacons, by no means an inconceivable case there would be in that community episcopacy indeed, but not the succession, or the sacerdotal powers connected therewith: and, according to Church principles, the change would have no effect in rendering its ministry more legitimate, or the acts of that ministry more valid, than they had previously been. It is with Apostolicity in the latter sense of the word that we have now to do. The Apostolic *form* of the Christian ministry having already been made a subject of discussion, the alleged devolution of Apostolic powers remains to be considered. It is evident, from what has been said above, that in this, and not in the mere identity of form, lies the essence of the so-called doctrine of the Apostolical succession. The present question relates, not to episcopacy, or any other form of polity *as such*, for under any form sacerdotal powers might have been transmitted, but to the alleged fact and nature of the transmission itself: episcopacy itself is affirmed to be essential to the Church chiefly because it is supposed that in and through the episcopate the original Apostolic commission, or rather the spiritual powers connected therewith, has been derived to the existing bishops, and through them to the inferior ministers of the Church.

The Romish doctrine of the Apostolical succession, which alone can claim the merit of being intelligible and consistent, is thus set forth in the formularies of Trent:—It is a principle everywhere laid down in Scripture, that no one may presume to undertake sacerdotal functions without a divine commission empowering him so to do. The authority of an ambassador to act as such must be derived from the supreme magistrate; otherwise his acts are null and void, and he himself liable to punishment: how much more strictly must we suppose this rule to be observed in the case of those who are the ambassadors of heaven, and "stewards of the mysteries of God;" the appointed channels of communication between God and man, and the representatives of God upon earth.* Among the Jews, as we know, "no man" took "this honour to

* "Cum episcopi et sacerdotes, tanquam Dei interpretes et internuncii quidam sint, qui ipsius Dei personam in terris gerunt."—Cat. Conc. Trid. p. 2. c. 7. s. 2.

himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron;" and every attempt on the part of unauthorized persons to invade the priest's office was visited by God with severe penalties. For this offence, Corah and his company were destroyed, and Uzziah struck with leprosy; for the same, Saul was deprived of his kingdom. If this was the case under the old dispensation, how much more reason have we to expect to find it so under the new, seeing the Christian priesthood as much excels the Levitical in dignity, as the new law is superior to the old. As regards matter of fact: we find that Christ Himself did not enter upon His public ministry until He had been anointed with the Spirit, and commissioned thereto by a voice from Heaven; and throughout His ministry, He is found constantly insisting upon His divine mission: "the Word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (John, xiv. 24.). In like manner when he was about to delegate the government of the Church to the Apostles, He gave them a formal commission to exercise the apostolic office: "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you" (John, xx. 21.). Thus divinely commissioned by the Lord of the Vineyard, the Apostles went forth preaching the Gospel; and when Christian societies multiplied, and it became impossible for the inspired ambassadors of Christ to exercise a personal superintendence over every church, they delegated a portion of their authority to others, whom they appointed to the pastoral office, transmitting to them at the same time the ordinary sacerdotal grace which they had themselves received from Christ. The Apostolic delegates in their turn handed down the ministerial commission to their successors; and thus it has descended to the present time, each member of the series receiving, at his ordination, or consecration, both the commission and the powers which belonged to his predecessors.

The power thus transmitted from hand to hand is two-fold,— a power of order and a power of jurisdiction. By the former is meant the power of consecrating, offering, and ministering, the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist; by the latter, the power of absolution, which is concerned with the government and guidance of the mystical body of Christ.* These powers were con-

* "Hoc autem (sacerdotium) ab eodem Domino Salvatore nostro institutum esse, atque apostolis, eorumque successoribus in sacerdotio, potestatem traditam consecrandi, offerendi et ministrandi corpus et sanguinem ejus, necnon et peccata dimittendi et retinendi, sacræ literæ ostendunt, et Catholicæ ecclesiæ traditio semper docuit."—Conc. Trid. Sess. 23. c. 1. "Intelligant fideles . . quanta ipsi ecclesiæ ejusque ministris potestas divinitus tributa sit. Ea autem duplex est, ordinis et jurisdictionis. Ordinis potestas ad verum Christi Domini corpus in sacrosancta Eucharistia refertur. Jurisdictionis vero potestas tota in Christi cor-

ferred upon the Apostles on distinct occasions: they were made priests, and received the power of order, when our Lord at the Last Supper delivered them His body to eat, and His blood to drink:* and they received the power of jurisdiction, when, after His resurrection, Christ sent them forth with His own delegated authority: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John, xx. 22, 23).† By the Apostles these powers were transmitted to their successors, and by them in turn to theirs; and thus, by perpetual derivation, they have descended to the present church.

The external instrument of transmission is the Sacrament of Orders, the administration of which belongs to the bishop alone. The visible sign of the Sacrament is—after the apostolic precedent—the laying on of hands; the inward effect is two-fold: first, the impressing upon the soul of a spiritual character, or stamp, which is indelible, so that he who is once made a priest can never return to the condition of a layman; and, secondly, grace, not sanctifying, but ministerial (gratia gratis data), for the valid performance of sacerdotal functions.‡

This theory of the apostolical succession is, as has been observed, clear and consistent; and the conclusions which follow from it are obvious. Where there are no sacraments, and no forgiveness of sins, there is, as all admit, no Church; but there are no sacraments, at least no Eucharist, nor is there any absolution, where there is no lawful priesthood; and there is no legitimate priesthood where there are no true bishops—successors of the Apostles—to administer the sacrament of orders; and those

pore mystico versatur."—Cat. Conc. Trid. p. 2. c. 7. s. 11. "Observandum est in ordinatione presbyterorum, de quibus præcipue disputatur, duas conferri potestates: unam consecrandi Eucharistiam, quæ dicitur potestas in corpus Christi verum: alteram absolvendi a peccatis, quæ dicitur potestas in corpus Christi mysticum."—Bellarmin. De Sac. Ord. c. 9.

* "Si quis dixerit, illis verbis, Hoc facite in meam commemorationem, Christum non instituisse Apostolos sacerdotes; aut non ordinâsse, ut ipsi aliique sacerdotes offerrent corpus et sanguinem suum: anathema sit."—Conc. Trid. Sess. 22. Can. 2.

† "Dominus autem sacramentum pœnitentiæ tunc præcipue instituit, cum a mortuis excitatus, insufflavit in discipulos suos, dicens: Accipite Spiritum Sanctum; quorum remiseritis peccata, remittuntur eis; et quorum retinueritis, retenta sunt. Quo tam insigni facto, et verbis tam perspicuis, potestatem remittendi et retinendi peccata, ad reconciliandos fideles post baptismum lapsos, Apostolis et eorum legitimis successoribus fuisse communicatam, universorum patrum consensus semper intellexit."—Ibid. Sess. 14. c. 1.

‡ "Si quis dixerit, per sacram ordinationem non dari Spiritum Sanctum, ac proinde frustra episcopos dicere, Accipe Spiritum Sanctum; aut per eam non imprimi characterem: vel eum qui sacerdos semel fuit laicum rursus fieri posse: anathema sit."—Ibid. sess. 23. Can. 4.

only are true bishops who are in communion with the bishop of Rome: whence it follows, that beyond the pale of the Roman obedience there is no covenanted grace, the appointed channels through which it is to flow nowhere else existing. However startling this inference may appear, the premises once granted, it follows necessarily from them, and, indeed, is openly avowed by the church of Rome, which, in this respect, presents a favourable contrast with those amongst ourselves, who, adopting substantially the same theory of transmitted sacerdotal grace, appear to hesitate in following it out to its legitimate consequences. Or is it contended that the notion of sacerdotal grace for the valid discharge of priestly functions is not a necessary element in the doctrine of the apostolical succession, as held by the advocates of church principles, and is separable therefrom? This will hardly be affirmed; for in fact, apart from the secret virtue supposed to be conveyed by ordination, the doctrine in question loses all its real import, or, at any rate, contains nothing but what Protestants may and do equally hold. Every well instructed Romanist feels that to abandon the doctrine of the priestly character, official and psychological, which his church holds to be conveyed by the sacrament of orders, would be to divest the apostolical succession of that which, in his eyes, constitutes its real value. It would be well if they who are not Romanists, and yet lay so much stress upon this doctrine, would clear up to their own minds, and to the minds of others, what they really mean by it. Before inquiring what amount of truth may be contained in the above statements of the Romish formularies, it may be well to point out the connexion between the theory which they propound respecting the origin of ministerial functions, and the general view which Romanism takes of the nature and idea of the Church.

Christianity, being the new law of Christ, must present the same general characteristics which its predecessor, the law of Moses, did. Now every legal system of religion being, as has been already observed, necessarily of an artificial and arbitrary character in its appointments, inasmuch as it is intended to work from without inwards, and to produce the dispositions which it does not find present, a law from without will regulate in detail all matters connected with divine worship, and especially will determine the functions and persons of the sacerdotal order. The permanency of the external mould in which the worshipper is to be fashioned to religion being a principal object in every such system, the institution of the priestly order will be positive rather than

natural: it will come from without, not spring from within. *Moral* qualifications for the ministerial office—such as wisdom, or knowledge, or personal piety—will, under such a system, occupy a subordinate place, or, rather, may be altogether dispensed with: the great object being to make provision for a visible succession of sacerdotal persons, who, whatever they may be inwardly, shall at least possess an official sanctity. Besides, it is obvious that no one can guarantee the transmission of moral endowments, natural or spiritual. This object, the ancient systems of religion—the Jewish among the number—aimed at securing, and did, in fact, secure, by incorporating in themselves the principle of *caste;* that is, by attaching the priestly function to a certain tribe or family, separated for that purpose from the rest of the nation, and making it pass from father to son in the way of natural descent, irrespectively of moral qualifications. By this means, the perpetual existence of a visible priesthood was secured; the only contingency, and that not a probable one, which could destroy the succession being the extinction of the sacerdotal tribe, or family. An hereditary priesthood, the basis of the sacerdotal character being, not the *fitness* of the individual, but the consecration of the caste, is the natural accompaniment of every system of religion which aims at moulding men, by means of law and discipline, into a specific type of religious sentiment.

The Jewish priesthood was instituted on the principle just mentioned. The tribe of Levi was set apart to the ministry of the tabernacle, and out of it the family of Aaron to sacerdotal functions; and nothing more was necessary to qualify men for the priesthood than legitimacy of birth, and investiture with the sacred garments. It is obvious that if any thing analogous to this was to reappear under the Christian dispensation, it must undergo considerable modifications to render it less strikingly inconsistent with the general principles of the Gospel: it must put on a more spiritual form, and one capable of greater expansiveness. Particularly in one point a change was indispensable:—a priesthood propagating itself by natural descent would manifestly be unfitted for the purposes of a religion, the professed aim of which is, not, like Judaism, to be a training school for one nation only, but to embrace the whole world within its pale. The transmission, therefore, must be independent of race or tribe. It is, in fact, by thus modifying its aspect that Romanism is enabled to introduce the ministry of the law into the Gospel. The principle of caste is retained; but it appears under a new form better suited to Chris-

tianity. The powers which belong to the sacred office are transmitted only in one line, and in that line they are transmitted independently of any moral qualification on the part of the recipient: only, instead of priests by natural, we have priests by spiritual, descent, the existing body of bishops possessing the power, in and by the sacrament of orders, of spiritually generating pastors for the Church. As of old, so now, the legitimacy of the ministerial commission depends exclusively upon the legitimacy of the external succession, for the want of which no fulness of natural and spiritual endowment can compensate. Yet we are not to suppose that no internal grace accompanies the transmission of orders; that a priest becomes a priest solely by the visible imposition of hands. Some concession must, as regards this point, be made to the general spirit of Christianity, and therefore it is added that by the sacrament of orders, working, like all the others, *ex opere operato*, grace is conferred; not, however, sanctifying grace, but the mystical grace of priesthood, grace for the valid performance of holy functions, which may exist equally in those who have saving faith in Christ and in those who have not. Thus a degree of *inwardness* is imparted to what otherwise would be as purely external a matter as the succession of Eleazer to Aaron. Finally, as the ancient priests were always priests, no one having it in his power to reverse his natural birth, so the spiritual stamp or impressed character, which is a consequence of ordination, for ever distinguishes him who receives it from his brethren in Christ.

Thus do all the parts of the system hang together. The advocates of the Romish idea of the Church, whether belonging to the Church of Rome or amongst ourselves, are quite right in their supposition that between the general notion of the Church which they inculcate, and their doctrine of the Christian ministry, an intimate connexion exists. If the Gospel be a republication of the law, and the Church primarily an external institute, from the idea of which the sanctifying work of the Spirit is separable, it is but natural to conclude that, as in other points so as regards the ministry, the divine scheme of the Jewish dispensation has "passed into something higher and nobler, but higher and nobler of its own kind."* Wherever the Church is regarded as an institution for disciplining men into Christian dispositions, the ministry of the Church necessarily assumes the character of a positive appointment, founded upon an external law from which it derives its chief support and sanction.

* Maurice's Kingdom of Christ, vol. ii. letter 6.

But to return:—it is not by any means to be supposed that the Protestant rejects indiscriminately the principles asserted in his opponent's theory; on the contrary, in several of them he fully concurs. Thus, for example, no difference exists between the two parties respecting the necessity of an external vocation to the ministry. The Protestant, equally with the Romanist, holds that no man may take "this honour to himself;" that no pretension to internal qualifications, however well founded, is of itself sufficient to authorize the public exercise of ministerial functions; that, in the words of our article, "it is not lawful for any man to take upon himself the office of public preaching, or ministering the sacraments, in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same."* Before the candidate for the ministry can legitimately enter upon his office, he must receive a commission to do so from "men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard."† It would be needless to insist upon what is obvious on the most cursory glance at the Protestant confessions, ‡ were it not that, no doubt through inadvertence, the crude notions of certain sects on the subject of the ministerial vocation have been represented as those of Protestants in general: and just as the latter have been charged with denying that the Church is in any sense visible because they do not hold it to be so in the Romish sense, so they have been accused of doing away with the necessity of an external call to the ministry because they do not adopt the Romish interpretation of that expression. It is a common device in argument to represent an opponent as denying a proposition in every sense because he refuses to accept it in a particular one.

Moreover, far from its being denied, it is strongly asserted by the Reformed churches, that the ministerial office is intended to be perpetuated by succession: properly understood, the doctrine of the apostolical succession is not merely admissible, but Scriptural. In its legitimate acceptation, it enunciates the principle that to the existing body of Christian ministers in any Church it belongs, as their special prerogative, to examine into and authenticate the qualifications of those who are to succeed them, and to set them apart to their office by the imposition of hands. The delegated authority (ἐξουσία) to exercise ministerial functions is to spring, not from below but, from above; not from the Christian people in

* Art. 23. † Ibid.

‡ Conf. Hel. c. 18. Conf. Belg. s. 31. Conf. Bohem. Art. 9. Dec. Thorun. De Ordine Conf. Aug. Art. 14.

general, but from the clerical body, whatever its constitution may be.* The people may neither appoint nor remove their pastors without the concurrence of those from whom the latter are to receive, or have received, their investiture of office: the Christian ministry is not to be a creation of the popular will. That the popular voice is to have a share in the appointment of ministers is true; but it is not to trench upon the inalienable right of the clerical body, — self-perpetuation.

This important principle, with which the maxims of modern sectarianism are as much at variance as they are with the Scriptural idea of a local church, is, if not expressly laid down in Scripture, at least to be inferred from apostolic example. The Apostles received their commissions from Christ, as He had received his from the Father. When it became necessary to create a new ministerial office in the Church, the Apostles, while directing "the multitude" to select qualified persons to serve as deacons, reserved to themselves the prerogative of formally admitting those selected to their office. In like manner, when a still further addition was to be made to the original polity, it was the Apostles who "ordained elders in every church:" and if Timothy and Titus are to be regarded as prototypes of the episcopal office, St. Paul it was who placed them in this position at Ephesus and Crete. In short, there is no instance in the New Testament from which it can be inferred that the ministerial commission is to take its rise from the Christian people; the contrary impression is conveyed by all the recorded cases. The apostolic epistles afford a strong confirmation of what we thus gather from the acts of the Apostles. In those of them which are addressed to churches, we find no allusion, however remote, to what, had it really been the province of the whole congregation, must have been one of its most important acts, — the appointment, or removal, of its pastors. When directions of this kind are given, it is not to churches, but to individuals, such as Timothy and Titus. It matters not by what particular designation we describe these ministers of Christ, whether we call them bishops, or evangelists, or apostolic delegates: it is sufficient that they were ministerial persons, and, for the time being at least, chief in authority in their

* "Qui electi sunt ordinentur a senioribus cum orationibus publicis et impositione manuum."— Conf. Hel. c. 18. "Nec quenquam nisi . . . . . ecclesiæ et imprimis ejus antistitum assensu subsequente, per electionem ecclesiæ ad ministerium vocatum, et per ordinationem, seu manuum impositionem a presbyterio confirmatum ministerium in ecclesiâ exercere posse."— Declar. Thorun. De Ordine. Presbyterio competit examen, ordinatio, et inauguratio. Gerhard, loc. 24. c. iii. s. 4. Compare Calvin, Instit. L. 4. c. iii. s. 15.

respective localities. To them it is, and not to the Christian people at large, that St. Paul gives authority to commit to faithful men the things which they had heard of him,* — to ordain elders,† to examine into the qualifications of candidates for the ministry, and to lay hands upon none but such as proved themselves fit for the office. The omission of any such directions in the epistles addressed to churches is the more remarkable when we consider how largely in those epistles St. Paul treats of the duties of a Christian society; how unreservedly he discusses the most important questions of doctrine and practice, everywhere recognizing the competency of the Christian people to decide upon such points; nay, how clearly, as will be shown hereafter, he teaches that the sovereignty of a Christian Church resides neither in the pastors nor in the people alone, but in the whole community. Only upon the right, or the duty, of the congregation to appoint its own pastors, he is silent. Once, indeed, he mentions the assumption of such a power, but in terms which by no means recommend it to our adoption; speaking of it as a sign of the latter evil times that the people "will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." ‡

That the ministerial function was, in this sense, to be transmitted by succession appears a plain inference from the recorded precedents of Scripture; and it is equally evident how important a counterpoise is thereby afforded to the working of popular influence, sure to make itself unduly felt wherever the Christian minister is looked upon as a creature of the congregation. They who regard it as their right to choose their own pastor, and to depose him, without the sanction of any portion of the order to which he belongs, will not be likely to permit him "to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine;" § nor to comply with the apostolic injunction, "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." ‖ It is one of the many evils connected with the independent theory of church polity that it precludes the possibility of adhering to Scriptural precedent as regards the point under discussion,—the transmission of the ministerial office. The erroneous supposition upon which that theory rests—viz. that a single congregation under its single pastor, and that only, is a Church in the Scriptural sense of the word—evidently excludes the very idea of a ministerial succes-

* 2 Tim. ii. 2.
† Tit. i. 5.
‡ 2 Tim. iv. 3.
§ 2 Tim. iv. 2.
‖ Heb. xiii. 17.

sion. The pastor dies, or is removed; upon which the people, without a pastor, proceed to elect a successor: but there is no existing body of clerical persons to transmit the commission. The defect is attempted to be remedied by calling in the pastors of neighbouring churches to assist in ordaining the new minister: but it is admitted that this is regarded in no other light than as an act of recognition and approval. According to the apostolic model, a church might, indeed, be so small as to consist but of a single congregation; but, however small it was, it was never left under the guidance of a single pastor: it had its deacons, its college of presbyters, and, very soon, its bishop: so that vacancies in the clerical body were filled up under the sanction and presidency of the survivors, and the Church was never reduced to the state of a congregation without pastors. Individuals might depart, or be removed, but the clerical corporation never failed.

Thus far there is Scriptural ground for the doctrine of a ministerial, and, therefore, an apostolical, succession, the Apostles being, as all admit, the first link in the chain: and thus far, therefore, there is no controversy between Protestants and their opponents. The essential differences lie deeper:—they relate to the inner constitution and origin of the New Testament ministry as contrasted with that of the Law; on which point the theory propounded by the Romish formularies appears to be entirely at variance with the statements of Scripture.

Romanism, as we have seen, true to its general conception of the Church, considers the Christian ministry in the light of a positive institution, delivered in a set form from without, and placed over, instead of emanating from, the Christian body: its connexion with the Church being not natural but positive, or a matter of law. Very different is the light in which Scripture teaches us to regard it. In order to understand better the relation in which, according to Scripture, the ministry of the Church stands to the Church itself, we must recur for a moment to the primary idea of the latter, as expounded in a former part of this work. A Christian Church is, according to the idea, a congregation of faithful or believing men, sanctified by the Spirit of God. Upon this general idea of the Church, as a community inwardly constituted by the Spirit, we must now engraft the further one, so vividly set forth in St. Paul's epistles—viz. that each Church, like the mystical body of Christ itself, is a living organization, or a whole composed of different parts with different functions, by the combination of which organic unity is effected. Such, at least, is

the scope of the well known passage in 1 Cor. xii., in which the Church — that is, the Christian society at Corinth — is compared to the human body, which, while one common principle of life pervades it, yet, is composed of many different members, each of which has a separate function necessary to the well-being of the whole. Even if we suppose the Apostle to have in view in that passage rather the whole of Christ's mystical body, of which each local church is a visible manifestation, than a single Christian society, we must yet remember that in every perfectly organized whole, the component members are themselves organic: the eye, for example, presents an instance of the same combination of different parts tending to one end, which, on a larger scale, the whole human body does. According to St. Paul, then, a Church is a living body, pervaded throughout by one principle of spiritual life which is common to all its members, but also exhibiting that variety of function which enters into the very idea of organic unity, and which distinguishes an organized body from a mere aggregate of similar atoms. Of this truth we have, perhaps, a recognition in the view which Ignatius takes of the bishop, as holding, as the visible centre of unity, the same place in respect to each visible church which Christ does to His mystical body; though, as is usual in the Church system, Ignatius confounds the outward manifestation of the thing with the thing itself.

Now in a religious society of this kind, having its true differentia within, or in the presence of the Holy Spirit, whose ordinary influences are participated by all its members, it would be natural to expect that the diversities of function, or of office, which are necessary to its well-being, should follow the character of the society itself, and, instead of being imposed from without in the form of a literal prescription, should spring from within, and emanate directly from the same divine Spirit whose quickening influences pervade the whole mass. And so, in fact, it was divinely provided. When Christ went up on high, and sent down the Holy Ghost to dwell, in a peculiar sense, in His Church, He, at the same time, poured out upon the Christian society a rich abundance of spiritual gifts, — all manifestations of the same Spirit, and all intended to minister to the edification of the body of Christ. The outpouring of these gifts had been spoken of in prophecy as a characteristic of the Gospel times; and the prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when, simultaneously with the general effusion of the Spirit, one of the most remarkable of them was exhibited in exercise, — that of speaking in strange

tongues. St. Paul, in various passages of his Epistles, expatiates upon the abundance of spiritual endowments with which the Apostolic Church was replenished, and points out the object for which they were bestowed. "There are diversities of gifts," he says, "but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of Spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."* And again, "God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."† Thus one peculiarity of the Gospel, as contrasted with the law, is, that church offices presuppose spiritual endowments; the office falling not, as of old, to the next casual successor, but to those qualified for it, and the qualification springing directly from Christ, present by His Spirit in the midst of His people. The warrant for exercising the office is, in the first instance, and before it is anything else, the possession of the gift of the Spirit, who in this matter refuses to be tied to any external prescription, and divideth "to every man severally as He will."

It will be seen from the passages just cited that among the gifts poured out by Christ upon His church, those connected with the various functions of the ministry are classed. "Apostles," "prophets," "teachers," "helps," and "governments," all pertain to the ministerial office. Still more pointedly, but in the same sense, is the ministry referred to the direct agency of the Holy Spirit in the corresponding passage (Ephes. iv. 11, 12.); "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ." And thus we arrive at the true interpretation of these passages, the

* 1 Cor. xii. 4–12. † Ibid. ver. 28.

misunderstanding of which has given rise to erroneous theories. It is not unfrequently supposed that St. Paul here intends to enumerate the *different orders* of the ministry, whence the conclusion drawn has been that, in the apostolic age, several ministerial *offices* existed, which afterwards fell into abeyance; while others, feeling a difficulty in the supposition that any office emanating from Christ himself could have so suddenly ceased, have, in modern times, attempted to revive those mentioned by the Apostle;—with what success is well known. But, in truth, in neither of the passages is the allusion directly to ministerial offices, nor is it in this point of view that the ministry is referred to Christ's own institution. What the Apostle is speaking of is, not *offices*, but *gifts:* as appears plainly from his classifying apostles, prophets, evangelists, &c., with the gifts of working miracles, of healing, and of speaking with tongues. The only apparent exception is the gift of "Apostles," for no doubt the apostolate was not a gift merely, but an office, and of divine institution; and yet it is probable that St. Paul was here considering it rather in reference to the inward grace peculiar to it, for example, the grace of inspiration, than in its outward aspect, as a distinct office in the Church. Be this as it may, it is certain that none of the other designations—"prophets," "evangelists," "pastors and teachers"—are those of offices in the apostolic church, which possessed only three distinct ones connected with the ministry,—viz. apostles, presbyters or overseers, and deacons. This will be obvious if we consider that several of the functions mentioned by St. Paul might be united in one person: thus an Apostle might be, and indeed was, an "evangelist" also, and "a teacher:" the same individual might be "a prophet," a "pastor," and a governor: and all might possess the gifts of healing, or of miracles. These passages, therefore, establish nothing respecting the ministerial *offices* of the apostolic age: what they do teach us is, that the spiritual endowments necessary for the office of an apostle, a pastor, a teacher, or a governor of the Church, whether these functions be united in the same person or not, flow directly from Christ, and are a part of the standing spiritual constitution of the Church.*

* Both Bilson and Hooker give the true sense of the passages in question. The former, commenting on 1 Cor. xii. 28., says, "To make us understand that we must not confound the functions in the Church with the gifts of the Spirit, much less mistake the one for the other, let us number the gifts of the Spirit that are noted in this one chapter, and see whether the public functions of the church can in any way be proportioned to them. . . . . Here are nine gifts of the Holy Ghost numbered . . . . I trust there were not so many distinct offices in the Church." And, again, on the parallel passage, Rom. xii. 6., "He speaketh

The word χάρισμα is the generic term by which the manifold gifts of the Spirit, poured out upon the apostolic Church, are in the new Testament designated. It signifies either a natural endowment, sanctified by Christian faith, and applied, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to the edifying of the Christian body; or an extraordinary spiritual gift, of a supernatural and miraculous character, in the exercise of which the divine agent was more conspicuous than the human. Thus, when St. Paul describes, as gifts of the Spirit, "the word of wisdom," and "the word of knowledge," or "helps and governments," he must be supposed to mean natural faculties, in the one case of a speculative, in the other, of a practical cast, employed for the furtherance of Christ's kingdom; while such gifts as "faith," "healing," "the working of miracles," "prophecy," "discerning of spirits," "divers kinds of tongues," and "the interpretation of tongues," evidently belong to another class, a class in which the influence of the Spirit was seen operating more independently of the human agent, and in the way of immediate impulse. In the exercise of the gift of speaking with tongues, it was frequently the case that the rational understanding (νοῦς) was incapable of explaining intelligibly "the deep things of God," with which "the Spirit," the organ of divine intuition, was occupied;* a state of mind resembling that which appears to have characterized the prophets when under the influence of inspiration. Another division of the charismata — or spiritual gifts of the New Testament — is into those which displayed themselves in *word*, and those which had a more particular reference to *action*, or the conduct of affairs. To the former class belong "wisdom," or a deep apprehension of Christianity in its practical aspect, and "knowledge," or a theoretical insight into the nature and connexion of Christian doctrines, both which gifts

indeed of divers gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, for so χαρίσματα διάφορα doth import; of divers offices he speaketh not."—Perpet. Govern. &c. c. 10. pp. 193 & 198. Similarly Hooker: "I beseech them therefore, which have hitherto troubled the church with questions about degrees and offices of ecclesiastical calling, because they principally ground themselves upon two places" (1 Cor. xii. 28. and Ephes. iv. 11.), "that, all partiality being laid aside, they would sincerely weigh and examine whether they have not misinterpreted both places, and all by surmising incompatible offices, when nothing is meant but sundry graces, gifts, and abilities, which Christ bestowed."—Eccles. Pol. lib. v. c. 78. s. 8.

* Ἐὰν γὰρ προσεύχωμαι γλώσσῃ, τὸ πνεῦμά μου προσεύχεται ὁ δὲ νοῦς μου ἄκαρπός ἐστι.—1 Cor. xiv. 14. Perhaps, however, the words πνεῦμά μου should be taken as equivalent to πνεῦμα Θέου ἐν ἔμοι, in which case the Apostle's meaning will be, In the ecstatic condition peculiar to the exercise of the gift of speaking, or praying, in a tongue, my understanding is passive, and it is the Spirit of God who dwells in me that is really speaking through me as an instrument.

found their sphere in the regular and stated office of teaching in the Church; "prophecy," or a sudden impulse of the Spirit, which enabled the subject of it to utter with extraordinary power words of warning or of exhortation, especially the former, inasmuch as the gift was intended principally for the awakening of unbelievers (1 Cor. xiv. 25.); "speaking with tongues," or the uttering in a state of ecstatic rapture during which personal consciousness was comparatively in abeyance, of dark sayings, expressive of the spiritual realities with which the soul was occupied, which required an interpreter to make them intelligible to the bystanders (1 Cor. xiv. 27.); this gift itself of interpretation (Ibid. ver. 26.); and the critical faculty of proving, or judging, what was delivered in the congregation (*διάκρισις πνευμάτων*) See 1 Cor. xiv. 29.) Under the latter head are to be placed the gift of "governments" (*κυβερνήσεις*), which appears to have comprised a general aptitude for the conduct of ecclesiastical affairs, and for church-government; "helps" (*ἀντιλήψεις*), or practical skill in the duties peculiarly appropriated to the diaconate,—as the care of the sick, the distribution of alms, &c.,—and the gifts of "healing," and of working miracles. Several of these special gifts bear the same names as the ordinary graces of the Spirit common to all Christians; as, for example, we read of a gift of "faith;" but the two must be carefully distinguished. All Christians possessed faith, wisdom, and knowledge; but they did not all possess the gifts denoted by those terms. *

The passage in the first epistle to the Corinthians (chapters 12, 13, and 14), from which we derive our chief information respecting the spiritual gifts of the apostolic church, has already been referred to as illustrative of the distinctive character of Christian worship in that age, which we thence gather to have been homiletic, and not sacrificial or typical: it is important, also, in another

* In Neander's Geschichte der Pflanzung, &c. i. pp. 173—184, will be found a full and satisfactory discussion of the whole subject of the New Testament *χαρίσματα*. See also Olshausen's Commentary on Acts, ii. 4.; 1 Cor. xii. 13, 14. That the gift of "speaking with tongues" means something separable from the power of speaking in different languages seems evident from the manner in which St. Paul speaks of it in Cor. xiv., especially his use of the singular number, as in v. 27. We may, with Olshausen, suppose that the gift, in its highest and most perfect form,—as it was given, for example, on the day of Pentecost —included a power of speaking in different languages, but that otherwise it consisted in a sublime rapture, in which the individual uttered expressions resembling the Apostle's *ἄρρητα ῥήματα* (2 Cor. xii. 4.), and which were unintelligible to the hearers without an interpreter. It is obvious that in an actually constituted church, like that of Corinth, the power of speaking various languages would be of comparatively little use as regards edification.

point of view, as helping to teach us what the Christian ministry, in its *idea*, is. When the church had "come together into one place," for the purpose of mutual edification, free scope was given to the exhibition of the various gifts of the Spirit in whomsoever they might be found. That a stated ministry of presbyters and deacons existed in the Corinthian church when St. Paul wrote admits of no doubt; but it is remarkable how, throughout the whole of his discussion, the office, as compared with the gift, recedes into the back-ground. That the formal pastors of the Church had been selected for their office on the ground of their possessing, and proving that they possessed, the requisite spiritual gifts, we may with certainty conclude; and therefore we may also conclude that they took a prominent part in the proceedings alluded to by St. Paul, the prophets, teachers, speakers in tongues, &c., being chiefly, if not exclusively, of their number: but it is remarkable that their right to stand forth in the Christian assembly and edify their brethren is made by the Apostle to rest, not so much upon their official position, as upon the fact that they were men spiritually gifted from above. Otherwise, none but they would have been permitted to speak; whereas it is clear from St. Paul's observations, that every one in the assembly who gave proof of his possessing a spiritual gift had liberty to exercise it, a liberty which the Apostle, far from restricting, evidently sanctions, with the one provision, that the law of order and decency should not be infringed, and the one limitation, that women should "keep silence in the churches." The whole scene, as described by the Apostle, conveys the liveliest impression of the freedom, the absence of formality, the natural living energy, which characterized the Apostolic church. Besides the stated instruction which we must presume to have always formed a part of the proceedings, speaking with tongues and prophesying were to have their place. St. Paul indeed gives the preference to the latter, as being more edifying to the assembly in general; but the former under due control might be rendered profitable. Only when no possessor of the gift of interpretation was present, he who spake with tongues was to remain silent. The prophets were to "speak two or three;" while the hearers, in the exercise of the gift of spiritual discernment, were to "judge" whether what was delivered were agreeable or not to the doctrine of Christ. If, while one was speaking, a divine impulse (*αποκάλυψις*) were communicated to another, the first was to "hold his peace," or bring his discourse to a speedy conclusion. For "all" might "prophesy, one by

one," that "all" might "learn," and "all" might "be comforted." (1 Cor. xiv. 27—31.).

That the principle of formal transmission is not applicable to spiritual gifts of this kind is evident from their very nature, as well as from the facts of Scripture. Natural endowments obviously follow no such law; nor do we find that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit did so. They were not committed, in the first instance, to a priestly caste, with a power to hand them down to their successors; but they manifested themselves, independently of any such law of succession, here and there in the congregation; and while, as has been already observed, the commission to exercise them sprang from the existing body of Christian ministers, — the Apostles first, and afterwards their successors in the ministry, — the gift itself, whatever it might be, proceeded directly from Christ; and the more we ascend from the circumstantials to the essence of the ministerial office the more clearly does it appear that it is the Holy Ghost who, in the first instance, gives to the church overseers. We may here trace a correspondence between the perpetuation of the ministry and that of the church itself. Just as in adding members to His mystical body Christ makes use indeed of the visible church as an instrument, but has not committed to it the power of transmitting spiritual life, reserving to Himself the prerogative of quickening souls, so in calling men to the ministry, He has given authority to the existing body of ministers to confer the external commission: but the inward endowment — that which is properly divine in the ministerial vocation — is His alone to give, and is given according to the good pleasure of His will.

The only apparent exception to this rule which we find in the New Testament is the power which the Apostles appear to have possessed of conferring upon baptized believers, by the imposition of their hands, certain extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; especially those of speaking with tongues, and prophecy. That the Apostles did possess such a power appears from several recorded instances. Thus when, through the preaching of Philip, many Samaritans embraced the Christian faith, and received baptism, the Apostles Peter and John were sent from Judea to perfect what was wanting in the new converts, and especially to communicate those visible and miraculous effects of the Spirit, which in that age commonly accompanied His ordinary grace, and which, from some unexplained cause, had not followed the conversion of the Samaritans. The Apostles, accordingly, "when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Then laid they

their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."* In like manner, it was not until St. Paul had laid his hands upon the baptized disciples at Ephesus that "the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied."†

A closer examination, however, of this exceptional case proves that it is not really so. In the first place, on two remarkable occasions, the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and the conversion of Cornelius, the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were conferred immediately from heaven, and without the intervention of any human instrument. That this was a departure from the ordinary rule, intended to mark the importance of the events thus distinguished, the one being the formal establishment of Christ's Church upon earth, the latter the first admission of the Gentile converts into it, is no doubt true; still, the circumstance proves that no exclusive connexion was established between the Apostolic imposition of hands and the gifts of the Spirit; the Divine Agent having occasionally acted in this matter as He does in dispensing His ordinary grace, irrespectively of any law cognizable by human understanding: — "The wind bloweth where it listeth," &c. Secondly, though we gather from Scripture that to the Apostles this prerogative belonged, it does not appear that any but they possessed it, or that they themselves had the power of transmitting it to others. The very passages which prove that the Apostles possessed the power seem also to prove that to none but them was it committed. That Philip, for instance, was abundantly endowed with the gifts of the Spirit, is evident from the striking miracles which he performed among the Samaritans; and yet we may gather from the narrative alluded to that he could not, by the imposition of his hands, communicate them to others, for the Apostles Peter and John appear to have been sent for the very purpose of supplying, in this particular point, what he had left unfinished. So, throughout the New Testament, it is Apostles, and Apostles only, that are mentioned as having power to impart the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit; a privilege which, doubtless, belonged to them as inspired persons, "filled with the Holy Ghost" in a sense in which no other believers could be said to be so. That St. Paul considered this power to be a distinctive privilege of his order appears from the use he makes of it in 2 Cor. xii. 12., to refute his adversaries, who insinuated that he did not rank, as an Apostle, with those who had seen Christ in the flesh: for that by "the signs of an Apostle"

* Acts, viii. 14—17.

† Ibid. xix. 6.

he means more especially the power of imparting the gifts of the Spirit is altogether probable, the mere working of miracles not being by any means an exclusively Apostolical prerogative. On the whole, the conclusion to which Scripture leads us on this difficult and obscure point is, that while the Apostles could, by the imposition of their hands, communicate to others certain spiritual gifts — for such gifts as "wisdom," "knowledge," and a faculty for "governing," we never read of their imparting, — they could not transmit to others a similar power; whence we may conclude that the prerogative ceased with these its first possessors, and that, although there is every reason to believe that extraordinary gifts continued for a time after the Apostolic age to manifest themselves in the Church, they were not imparted, as they had been by the Apostles, by the imposition of hands.* To the foregoing considerations we may add, in the third place, that the gifts of the Spirit appear to have been bestowed indiscriminately upon all baptized believers; there being no ground for the supposition of Bilson and others that the privilege was confined to those whom the Apostles desired, by the impartation of special endowments, to qualify for the office of the ministry. So far from this being the case, it seems to have been the practice of the Apostles to lay hands upon all those who had been recently baptized; and wherever the recipients of the rite were worthy, "the Holy Ghost fell upon them," and the gift of tongues, or prophecy, followed as a matter of course. It is, indeed, reasonable to suppose, that from among persons thus gifted the formal ministry was chosen; but, though the supposition is not itself improbable, there is no satisfactory evidence that the Apostles in imparting the gifts had that special object in view. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the doctrine of the imposition of hands is mentioned as one of the elementary principles of the Gospel.

But whether it be the fact or not that others besides the Apostles possessed the power of imparting the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and that such powers were actually handed down by their

* Hence the groundlessness of the assumption that our rite of confirmation is *identical* with the apostolic imposition of hands. There is hardly any thing between them in common, save the outward sign. The Apostles, as *Apostles*, had no successors; and the signs which accompanied the apostolic rite, and which constituted its specific difference, have long ceased; there only remains the imposition of hands which they practised, and we practise now. The fact is, that the *ceremony* was continued in the church, as a salutary and scriptural one, when the effects that once followed it were withdrawn; and as a useful and scriptural custom of the church it can only now be regarded. In another point of view, however,—viz. as the supplement of infant baptism,—confirmation, or some equivalent ceremony, seems necessary in every church which practises infant baptism.

possessors to others, and continued to manifest themselves in the church for some time after the Apostolic age, is to the present argument comparatively immaterial. Even if we suppose that the Apostles frequently, if not exclusively, exercised the power inherent in them in order to qualify persons for the ministry, and that such ministerial persons as had themselves received extraordinary gifts from an Apostle — a Timothy, for example — could transmit them to his successors as long as such gifts existed in the church; the question still remains, of what *nature* were the gifts so transmitted? This is one of the essential points to be considered. Without a single exception the ministerial gifts mentioned in Scripture, whether given directly from Christ, or mediately through the Apostles, were of a moral or an intellectual nature; — that is, they were intended to qualify men, either for the ministry of the Word or for the government of the Church. The gifts of "wisdom," of "knowledge," of "faith," of "prophecy," of "discerning of spirits," of "tongues," of "the interpretation of tongues;" or those described as "helps, and governments;" to what department of the religious life do they belong? Obviously, not to the sacramental and mystical (save in so far as the ministry of the Word is itself of a sacramental character), but to the moral, to the class of divine influences which operate upon the heart through the medium of the understanding. No such gift as a mystical grace of priesthood, a gift to render the administration of Gospel ordinances — *e. g.* the Sacraments — valid, and which, from its nature, must exist independently of the moral or intellectual qualifications of the possessor, is recorded to have been communicated to believers by the Apostles. It will be shewn in a subsequent section that no such gift was *needed* in the Church, inasmuch as no law, confining the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to a priestly caste, represented in the Apostles, is found to have emanated either from Christ or the inspired Twelve; what we have now to observe is, that a spiritual gift of this mystical nature finds no place in the enumeration of the manifold manifestations of the Spirit which distinguished the Apostolic age; all of which, as has been observed, were moral in their nature, and found their sphere of exercise in the work either of teaching or of governing. Consequently, if it be so, that 2 Tim. i. 6. refers to Timothy's ordination by St. Paul, and not to the bestowing upon him of extraordinary gifts irrespectively of his ministerial vocation, we are still quite sure that the gift imparted to him by the Apostle, and which he was commanded to "stir

up," was not a spiritual power of "consecrating and offering the body and blood of Christ," or of remitting and retaining sins, but a moral gift of whatever kind, a gift which could be "stirred up," or made more active in its exercise, by reading, meditation, and prayer; a property which we know does not belong to the mystical grace of priesthood, the latter being incapable of increase or diminution by any moral efforts on the part of its possessor. And we are equally sure that when extraordinary gifts were withdrawn from the church, that which succeeded to them was of a moral, and not of a mystical, nature;—that is, that their place was occupied by natural or acquired endowments of mind or body, sanctified to the uses of the Church: and that when the prayer that the candidate for the office of a Presbyter or a Bishop may "receive the Holy Ghost" for the due performance thereof is granted, what is vouchsafed is, not a priestly virtue apart from which the sacraments have no validity, but increase of enlightening and sanctifying grace, grace to apply natural endowments to the edifying of Christ's body;—"the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;" a gift of the same nature with that which Timothy and others received by the imposition of St. Paul's hands.

From these remarks the points in which the Romish theory of the origin and perpetuation of the ministry diverges from the view presented in Scripture will be evident. Instead of the ministry being, in the first instance, a positive institution, coming to the Church from without, and, as it were, placed over it, it is a function of the Church itself, springs up from within the sacred enclosure, and, in its primary form, or before it is anything else, is a spiritual power flowing directly from Christ. The ministry does not, as Rome teaches, sustain the Church, but the Church sustains the ministry. The Church is supposed to be in existence, as a congregation of believers, sanctified by the Spirit of God: *within the Church* Christ, its divine Head, raises up, by the outpouring of spiritual gifts, its natural ministry, which then passes into a formal one; raises up, that is, men divinely qualified to teach, exhort, govern, and in other ways edify their brethren. Whether these men as yet bear formal offices in the Church or not is *comparatively* immaterial; the possession of the gift is their true warrant for exercising it. The formal ministry, which was itself natural before it was formal, must not suppress the existing natural one:—"quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesyings." The single exception to this divinely appointed order, that of the Apostles themselves, who, no doubt, were given to the Church

from without, is an additional proof, if any were needed, that their office was but a temporary one, instituted for the purpose of organizing the visible Church, but not intended to form a permanent part of its organization: it would not have been suitable that an order of ministers, whose special office it was to mould the polity of the Church into its appointed shape, should spring from the bosom of the Church itself. The Apostolate, therefore, and it alone of the ecclesiastical offices mentioned in the New Testament, was instituted before the Church came into existence, and stood related to the Church as an external authority. Moreover, they whom Christ thus endows with gifts for the ministry are supposed to be partakers of the common life of the Church; and extraordinary spiritual endowments always appear grafted upon the stock of a living faith. For divine wisdom, knowledge, or illumination are possessed only by the sanctified in heart, and the teachers of the Church must be themselves taught of God. "Apostles prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers" are members, as well as ministers, of the body of Christ: they are of the Church before they become its instructors and rulers. Hence, as might be expected, no such notion is found in the New Testament as that of grace to qualify for sacerdotal functions, distinct from, and independent of, the grace common to all Christians; or that the *divine* vocation to the ministry is a thing morally indifferent, possessed, if only the legitimate outward call be present, equally by the evil and the good. The inward call of the Spirit to the ministry presupposes sanctification by the same Spirit. Nor does this militate against the doctrine, asserted by the Reformers as well as by their opponents, that the unworthiness of the minister does not hinder the effect of his ministrations, whether in the Word or the Sacraments; for the question relates not to the external commission, but to the inward endowment. The Church, having by the exercise of discipline deposed from their ministry those whose lives are openly vicious, has done what in her lies towards making the natural and the positive ministry one and the same; but the entrance of carnally minded persons, or even secret unbelievers, into the sacred office cannot altogether be prevented, any more than their entrance into the Church itself. Such pastors are not indeed sent by Christ; nor have we any more reason to believe that the imposition of hands has a spiritual effect upon them than we have to suppose that baptism impresses a spiritual character upon an adult hypocrite: nevertheless, as long as the external commission remains unrevoked, the means of grace may be efficacious in their

hands, for their efficacy depends not upon the moral condition of the administrator, but upon the faith of the receiver. The Word and the Sacraments of Christ, as Augustin against the Donatists well argues, are still His Word and his Sacraments to whose custody soever they may be committed.

From the foregoing remarks it may be gathered that the significancy of the rite by which the Apostles were accustomed to set apart persons to the office of the ministry, and which has since been continued in the Church for that purpose, assumes in the eyes of the Protestant an aspect different from that which it bears in the Romish system. While the Romanist attaches a sacramental character to this rite,—that is, regards it as the special means through which the grace of ordination is conveyed to the ordained,—the Protestant formularies consider it rather as a recognition of the existence of ministerial gifts and the conveyance of authority to make them available to the edifying of the Church. Hooker rightly remarks:—"Out of men thus endued with the gifts of the Spirit upon their conversion to the Christian faith the Church had her ministers chosen, unto whom was given ecclesiastical power by ordination:" * the "ecclesiastical power," or commission, not a specific grace, being the effect of the imposition of hands. Those whom the Apostles endowed, or found to be endowed, with gifts for the work of the ministry they laid hands upon, transferring a familiar Jewish rite to this among other Christian purposes, but not as a sacramental channel of grace, not as being specially appropriated to this particular use. In truth, we find, in the New Testament, no specific rite of ordination, no ceremony, that is, specially appointed for the consecration of Christian priests, analogous to that by which the Jewish priests were admitted to their office: for not only was the imposition of hands used on a variety of occasions besides that of setting apart ministers,—such as communicating the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, or the miraculous healing of the sick,—but even in the case of ministers it was, not unfrequently, more than once administered to the same individual. Thus when Saul and Barnabas, who had been long engaged in preaching the Gospel, had a new and special field of labour assigned them by the Spirit, the "prophets and teachers" at Antioch laid their hands upon them with fasting and prayer, and so sent them forth to their destination. † In like manner Timothy appears to have

* E. P. Book 5. c. 78. s. 9.

† Acts, xiii. 1—3.

had hands laid upon him on two several occasions,* once by the presbyters, and a second time by St. Paul alone; though it is possible that the Apostle's imposition of hands had reference only to the imparting of spiritual gifts. But, according to the rule of the Church, ordination can never be repeated. Had the Church been a religious society founded on the same principle as that which pervaded the Jewish system, we cannot doubt that a special ceremony, and a ritual of consecration, would have been appointed for the inauguration of Christian ministers: that no such ceremony, or ritual, is to be found in apostolic Christianity is an additional proof, if such were needed, of the essential difference between the earlier and the later dispensation. "The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away:"—it was the Holy Ghost who intimated whom he would have sent forth; it was the Church that delivered to the persons selected their commission. The declared will of the Holy Ghost did not render the intervention of the Church, represented in her "teachers and prophets," unnecessary: if Paul and Barnabas were to go to the Gentiles, they must receive from the Church a commission to do so: but the inward call, or, in other words, the spiritual endowment, came directly from above. To authenticate the divine call, to carry into effect the divine intention, was the province of the Church.†

* 1 Tim. iv. 14.; 2 Tim. i. 6. The suggestion of some ancient writers that the word πρεσβύτεριον in the first of these passages may signify "the office of an elder" by which the passage is made to mean that Timothy was ordained to be a presbyter, has been abandoned by most recent commentators of any note. The word never occurs in that sense in the New Testament; nor was the office which Timothy held that of an elder, in the strict sense of the word. Much obscurity, however, hangs over the nature of the transactions alluded to by St. Paul,—*i. e.* whether the imposition of hands alluded to relates to the setting apart Timothy to the ministry, or to the imparting to him of spiritual gifts: but the former supposition seems to be the more probable.

† The appropriation of the word "ordination," and its derivatives, to signify the act of setting persons apart to the ministry, has had the effect of causing us to forget the secularity of its origin. So far from its involving, in its original meaning, any idea of a sacred or sacramental character, it is, of all ecclesiastical terms, the most purely secular in derivation. The word ordo, from which the Latin verb ordinare is derived, was the technical term for the senate or council, to which, in the colonies and municipal towns of the Roman empire, the administration of local affairs was committed, and the members of which were called Decuriones. The correlative, therefore, to the ordo was not the laity as distinguished from the priesthood, but the plebs, or private citizens, as distinguished from the magistracy. And, in fact, the word ordinare is never used by the classical writers to signify consecration to a sacred office. From the state it passed into the church, whence the frequent use, in the early Latin fathers, of the word plebs to denote

If the imposition of hands for the work of the ministry, as the rite meets us in Scripture, was but a recognition of the gifts which Christ had given, and a commission to exercise them, we should expect to find that it would be a matter of comparative indifference, except as a question of order, by whom the act was performed. And so, in fact, it is. No law respecting the minister of ordination can be found in the inspired record. Wherever Apostles were present, they naturally discharged this, the most important of all duties connected with the government of the Church: who so qualified to make choice of persons for the office of the ministry as they who possessed, in its highest form, the gift of spiritual discernment? Especially would this rule be observed in the first founding of a church, when the immaturity of Christian knowledge and experience on the part of the recent converts would obviously render it inexpedient that they should be entrusted with the selection of their own pastors, and, perhaps, even compel the Apostles present to lay hands, as Bilson suggests, upon certain individuals for the express purpose of qualifying them, by the imparting of spiritual gifts, for the exercise of the ministerial function. It would have been, for example, *unnatural* if, when St. Paul and St. Barnabas visited the churches of Asia which they had just founded (Acts, xiv. 21.), any other person but these Apostles had "ordained elders in every church;" or if in the imperfectly constituted churches of Ephesus and Crete, the Apostle being absent, his delegates and representatives had not been commissioned to do what, had he been there, he would have himself done. And in no part of Scripture is the rule laid down that to a legitimate ordination the presence of the Apostles or of their delegates was necessary; no intimation is given that a mystical virtue resided in the inspired founders of the Church, which they only were capable of transmitting, and without the transmitted possession of which no one was entitled to preach the Word or administer the sacraments. Where the Apostles were present, they, for the reasons above given, commonly ordained; where there were no Apostles, others might perform this office, provided only they

the Christian people, or the laity, in contrast with the clergy. It is reasonable to suppose that, when first introduced, its ecclesiastical corresponded to its civil meaning; and that to be "ordained," or to be invested with "holy orders," signified merely to be chosen a member of the governing body or presbytery in a Christian society; no reference being intended to a specific grade of religious standing supposed to be thereby acquired. To transfer the notions which in later times became connected with "ordination" into the apostolic age, or the sacred narrative, is the ready way to fall into serious errors of scriptural interpretation.

did so in an apostolical spirit. A Timothy, and a Titus, might during St. Paul's lifetime ordain elders with no prejudice to the validity of the ordinance; and if the transaction referred to in 1 Tim. iv. 14., relates to Timothy's ordination,* it seems to follow from it that the presbytery might, at the suggestion of "prophecy,"—*i. e.* by a special divine intimation,—send him forth into the vineyard. Or shall we say with some ancient commentators, who could cut the knot in no other way, that they who laid hands on Timothy were not presbyters, but bishops?† Even Apostles, like Paul and Barnabas, might be separated to their special mission by certain persons at Antioch concerning whom we cannot pronounce with certainty that they were of the positive ministry at all, still less of the highest order of it. In this, as in other matters of ritual and polity, the Church was left comparatively unfettered: the essential point was to pitch upon those who, in the words of Chrysostom, had been, previously to their formal ordination, ordained by the Spirit,‡ to whom it really appertains to qualify and send forth labourers into the vineyard.

And yet, to the candid inquirer, the circumstance will not be without weight, that, with the exception of Timothy's case above mentioned, no instance of presbyters ordaining occurs in Scripture; none certainly of an authority to ordain having been committed to them by the Apostles, as it was to Timothy and Titus. If the Apostles are not found claiming the power of ordination as the differentia of their office, it yet remains a *fact*, that to indi-

* This passage is not unfrequently combined with that in the second epistle, so as to make it appear that St. Paul laid hands on Timothy, the presbytery concurring with him in the act; but it is more natural to suppose that the Apostle alludes to different transactions which took place at different times. The argument founded on the difference of meaning of the prepositions *μετὰ* and *διὰ* appears hardly conclusive. It is true that the idea of concurrence is most strongly expressed in *μετὰ* than in *διὰ*, but the context itself, without calling in any other passage, explains the use of the proposition. A spiritual gift (of whatever kind) has been imparted to Timothy *μετὰ ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν* &c.—simultaneously with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery; the concurrence being between the gift and the imposition of hands.—See Winer's Grammatik, s. 51. p. 360. One general remark may be made upon the whole subject,—viz. that were it essential to the validity of ordinations that hands should be imposed by certain persons, or a certain order in the Church, the Scriptural evidence to that effect would never have been left so scanty and ambiguous as it has been.

† *Οὐ περὶ πρεσβυτέρων φησὶν ἐνταῦθα, ἀλλὰ περὶ ἐπισκόπων· οὐ γὰρ δὴ πρεσβύτεροι τὸν ἐπίσκοπον ἐχειροτόνουν.*—Chrysost. in loc. An instance of a mode of Scriptural interpretation very common with divines. Because in *his* time, presbyters could not, by the rule of the Church, ordain, Chrysostom argues that so it must have been in the first age of the Church.

‡ *Ὁρα πάλιν ὑπό τινων χειροτονεῖται· ὑπὸ Λουκίου τοῦ Κυρηναίου καὶ Μαναήν· μᾶλλον δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος.*—Chrysost. in Act. Hom. 27.

viduals, placed pro tempore in a position of ecclesiastical authority, and to such only, they delegated that power; and whatever conclusions may be fairly drawn from the fact, let them be drawn. The conclusion which probably will be drawn by the cautious student of Scripture is, that episcopal ordination, like episcopacy itself, is agreeable to the mind of St. Paul; and here he will stop. Should there, for example, from unavoidable or accidental circumstances, exist in any given church no order of ministers higher than presbyters, he will not venture to affirm that ordinations by such presbyters are invalid, or fail to convey the grace necessary for the discharge of the ministerial office; for this is precisely the point where the guiding light of Scripture fails us. The apostolic precedent and example it furnishes, but not the theory, not the doctrine. *Why* the Apostles or their delegates only ordained; whether on account of the existing circumstances of the Church, — such as the paucity of persons qualified to discharge so important a function, — or in obedience to the natural law of order, or, as the Church system would have it, because they alone possessed the power of transmitting the mystical grace of priesthood; upon this, the essential point in the discussion, Scripture throws no light. The Apostles have not supplied the grounds — the rationale — of their own mode of proceeding. And be it observed, to supply it for them, to append a dogmatical theory to what is simply a recorded fact, is to make a serious and unauthorized addition to the written record. When episcopacy was introduced, to bishops, as being so far successors of the Apostles as that they were the highest order of ministers in the Church, the power of ordination was, agreeably to apostolic precedent, reserved; a reservation which was ratified by ancient canons, and has received the sanction of immemorial usage. On this solid ground it is best to rest the practice of episcopal ordination. That bishops rightly ordain, we can say with certainty; to say that none but they can ordain, is, not only to add something of our own to the written Word, but to set aside the evidence of history, which testifies to the contrary,*

* The most remarkable instance in which a deviation from the rule that bishops only should ordain appears to have taken place in the well known one of the Alexandrian Church, in which, as Jerome reports, it was the custom for the presbyters "to choose one out of their own number, and, placing him in a higher position, to salute him bishop; as if an army should make an emperor, or the deacons should elect one of themselves and call him archdeacon." (Epist. ad Evang.) To the same effect is the testimony of Hilary the deacon, and of Eutychius of Alexandria. To the evidence of the former writer, Mr. Palmer (on the Church, part 6. c. 4.) objects that the word "consignant" which he (Hilary) uses signifies not "ordain," but "confirm," and to that of the latter, that he lived too late (in the tenth

and to abandon the moderate position taken up on this subject by our most learned divines.*

The conclusions to which the inspired testimony leads us on the subject under discussion may be briefly summed up thus: the ministry of the Church, in all that appertains to its essence, is the direct gift of Christ, to whom alone it properly belongs to perpetuate the succession of pastors: and in its primary state, or as it comes from Christ, it is not an external institution, but a spiritual power emanating from the bosom of the Church itself; it roots in the Church, and has no existence independently thereof. Along with the general outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, or rather as a constituent part of it, the ministerial gifts were given: they formed an element innate and natural of the spiritual constitution of the Christian body: they existed, and were exercised, before any positive institution of ministerial offices took place. To assume a fixed outward form, and become identified with a separate order of men, is a secondary, though necessary, process. Thus between the idea of the Church and that of its ministry, a perfect correspondence exists: the latter is homogeneous with the former. As a church is first a congregation of sanctified believers, and then an organized society, so the ministry

century) to have any weight in determining such a question. But however indecisive the expressions, or the opinions, of each writer separately may be, the presumption in favour of the obvious meaning of Jerome's language created by their united testimony is very strong, especially as it is confirmed by a passage which occurs in the book printed with Augustin's works, Quæstiones de utroque Testamento: — "Nam in Alexandria et per totam Ægyptum, si desit episcopus, consecrat presbyter." Quæst. CI. By the Benedictine editors this work is pronounced spurious: but the author is supposed to have lived not later than the close of the fourth century.

* "Hence it followeth that many things which in some cases presbyters may lawfully doe, are peculiarly reserved unto bishops, as Hierome noteth, — "Potius ad honorem sacerdotii quam ad legis necessitatem," — rather for the honour of their ministry than the necessity of any law. And therefore we read that presbyters in some places, and at some times, did impose hands, and confirm such as were baptized: which when Gregory bishop of Rome would wholly have forbidden, there was soe great exception taken to him for it, that he left it free againe. And who knoweth not that all presbyters in cases of necessity may absolve and reconcile penitents: a thing in ordinary course appropriated unto bishops? And why not by the same reason ordaine presbyters and deacons in cases of like necessity? . . . . . For if the power of order and authority to intermeddle in things pertaining to God's service be the same in all presbyters, and that they be limited in the execution of it only for order's sake, so that in case of necessity every of them may baptize and confirme those whom they have baptized, absolve and reconcile penitents, and doe all those other acts which regularly are appropriated unto the bishops alone; there is no reason to be given, but that in case of necessity, wherein all bishops were extinguished by death, or being fallen into heresie should refuse to ordaine any to serve God in his true worship; but that presbyters, as they may do all other acts, whatsoever special challenge bishops in ordinary course make unto them, might do this also." — Field, Of the Church, book iii. c. 39. Compare Hooker, E. P. lib. vii. c. 14. 11.

is, in the first instance, a spiritual power, and then an office transmitted in a visible line of succession. In short, the natural ministry is prior, in order of time, to the positive, and constitutes the true basis thereof. Romanism reverses the order, and makes the ministry positive before it is natural. By the expression natural ministry is meant simply that wherever there is a church of Christ, there will be found in it, not as a superadded endowment, but as an inherent property, Christians spiritually qualified to edify their brethren; and who, whether they ever form part of the positive *ordo* or not, constitute the true clerisy of the Church. This is the only true sense in which the Christian ministry can be said to be of *divine* institution; and in this sense it is so.

On the other hand, the positive ministry, or visible line of succession, is the ministry in its human, its ecclesiastical, aspect; the ministry, not as it comes from Christ, but as it is constituted mediately by the Church. Hence the positive is ever but an inadequate representation of the true ministry: it partakes of the imperfection which belongs to the Church itself in its visible aspect. For though the general assistance of the Spirit is promised to the elders, or bishop, in the work of "trying the spirits," or pronouncing upon the fitness of those who desire the office of a bishop, so that we may believe that the true and the positive ministry will, to a great extent, be coincident, yet, since infallibility in the exercise of this function is not secured, mistakes will from time to time occur; some whom Christ has not called will gain admission to the sacred office, and others, to whom He has given the necessary spiritual endowments, will be excluded therefrom. The case will be here exactly the same as with the Church itself: as the visible church, though it ought to be identical with the true, is never actually so in fact, so the positive succession is never actually identical with the true ministry. The approximation, however, to identity between the two may be continually progressive, and does, in fact, become closer in proportion as by persecution from without, and the energy of discipline within, the visible church becomes more and more one with the mystical body of Christ; the ministry approaching its ideal pari passu with the Church itself

But what if, the age of miraculous gifts having long since ceased, having, in fact, ceased with the Apostles, or soon after the apostolic age, the state of things depicted in St. Paul's epistles can furnish no precedents for a later time? The objection is an obvious, but at the same time only an apparent, one. However

different the circumstances of the Church may be in different ages, the great *principles* of the new dispensation, as laid down in Scripture, are immutable, or, at least, are intended to apply to the end of time. It is true that the abundant manifestations of the Spirit, which distinguished the infancy of the Church, were not meant to be perpetual: they were bestowed for a temporary purpose, and ceased as soon as the Church no longer needed them to sustain her own faith, or to make an impression upon the torpid mind of heathenism. In due time, ordinary endowments, moral and intellectual, which, when sanctified by the Spirit, had from the first found a sphere of exercise in the Church, were entirely to supersede the supernatural gifts which accompanied the Pentecostal effusion: "prophecy" and "speaking with tongues" were to give way to the stated teaching of official persons, and "wisdom" and "knowledge" were to be the result, not of the direct agency of the Spirit, but of study and reflection. Schools and universities, the study of languages and philosophy; mental and moral training, and the aptitude for business which is the result of experience; by these means that fitness for the ministry was to be acquired which at first was the direct gift of God. The transition from the period of immediate spiritual influence, to the normal state into which the Church was to settle, is distinctly marked in St. Paul's pastoral epistles. In these, the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit disappear altogether from view; and the directions given to Timothy in reference to the admitting of persons to the ministry are applicable to every age of the Church. Natural endowments for teaching or governing, and proved moral qualifications, were to govern his choice. "A bishop" must be "apt to teach," or have the χάρισμα διδασκαλίας always at command, so that the Church might not be dependent for edification upon the extraordinary impulses of the Spirit now sensibly waning: he must also be one who has given proof, by "well ruling his own house," of being qualified for the difficult task of governing the church of God. The deacons, too, must be selected on account of their known integrity of character; and not without a previous probation. At first, the duties of the presbytery bore a strict resemblance to those of the elders of the synagogue, whose proper function was, not to teach, but to maintain order during public worship, and to conduct the public business of the society: it was by no means necessary, perhaps not usual, that a Christian presbyter should both rule and teach. But in his first epistle to Timothy, St. Paul connects the two functions more closely, and

presbyters begin to be regarded as also the ordinary teachers of the Church. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour," or of a liberal stipend, "especially they who labour in the word and doctrine;" that is, such presbyters as, to their ordinary office of ruling, add that of giving public instruction. All these are indications, not to be mistaken, of an impending change in the *manner* of the divine administration of the Church; of the approach of a state in which the spiritual gifts for the Christian ministry should be confined to the sanctifying of those natural endowments which distinguish one Christian from another, and the communication of the ordinary and habitual graces of "power and love, and of a sound mind." The difference between the first age of the Church, when the blossoms of spiritual influence were thrown out in extraordinary abundance, and every subsequent period, is confessed: but the question is, does the difference relate to principles, or to circumstantials merely? Unquestionably to the latter: otherwise to us the greater portion of the teaching of Scripture on the subject of the ministry becomes a dead letter. If the nature of the Christian ministry, and the principles of its origin and perpetuation, are not to be gathered from the earlier epistles of St. Paul, Scripture is not profitable to us for instruction upon that subject. But this, in fact, is exactly the point of instruction which that portion of the divine Word is calculated to furnish. It presents us with the true idea of the ministry of the new covenant, which is there seen in its primary state, and before it has settled into a form of outward consistency. And what we gather from the statements of St. Paul is, that the Christian ministry is a function of the Church which it is intended to edify; that "gifts"—that is, in the first age extraordinary spiritual powers, and afterwards intellectual and moral endowments sanctified by divine grace—enter into the idea of it; that Christ Himself, not the Church nor the minister of ordination, bestows these gifts; and that the outward commission, being but a recognition of the gift previously existing and an authority to exercise it, is, though ordinarily necessary, subordinate in importance to the interior spiritual reality of which it is the attestation.

It only remains to draw the necessary inferences respecting the necessity of an uninterrupted visible succession. If, by insisting upon the importance of this, it be merely meant that the Scriptural rule,—so far as a rule is to be gathered from Scripture,—is that the authority (ἐξουσία) to exercise ministerial functions should be derived from persons themselves of the ministerial body, no

objection can be taken against the statement, for undoubtedly it appears to be sanctioned by apostolical precedent. This rule being established, and the Christian ministry being supposed to be instituted in the persons of the Apostles, an apostolic succession becomes inevitable. The Apostles would transmit the commission to others, their successors, not indeed in their apostolical, but in their ministerial, functions; and those whom the Apostles set apart to the ministry would, in like manner, ordain others; and so the commission would be perpetuated in a line of visible succession. Moreover, since it is an historical fact that towards the close of the apostolic age the ministry is found to have assumed the episcopal form, and that to the bishop was reserved the right of ordaining, the ministerial commission must, of course, have descended in the line of the episcopate. The fact, therefore, that the ministerial succession, beginning with the Apostles, was perpetuated in the episcopate, as its regular channel, for more than 1500 years after the commencement of the Church, is undeniable; nor is it necessary to say that needlessly to disturb this regular devolution of the ministerial office is a sin, for which those guilty of it must give account. Thus far the Protestant can go. It is well known that the continental Reformers repeatedly protested that, provided liberty were granted them to preach the Gospel, they would willingly adhere to the visible succession, and exercise their ministerial functions under the Catholic bishops: it is well known how much they lamented the necessity under which they were placed of deviating from the established order, and instituting, as it were, a new succession. * But what if such a necessity should arise, as it did in the sixteenth century? What if the only alternative were, as it then was, either to sacrifice the Gospel itself, or to dispense with episcopal ordination? Should he be placed in such a position as this, the Protestant would act as Luther and Calvin did, under similar circumstances; nor would he be disturbed by the asseverations of his opponents, that thereby he would be deprived of a true ministry, and of valid sacraments. Appealing, as usual, from the ecclesiastical, to the apostolical, version of Christianity, recurring to the authentic records of inspiration, he would insist upon the fact that the gift, not the

* "Porro hic iterum volumus testatum, nos libenter conservaturos esse ecclesiasticam et canonicam politiam, si modo episcopi desinant in nostras ecclesias sævire. Hæc nostra voluntas et coram Deo et apud omnes gentes ad omnem posteritatem excusabit nos, ne nobis imputari possit quod episcoporum auctoritas labefactatur, ubi legerint atque audierint homines, nos injustam sævitiam episcoporum deprecantes, nihil æqui impetrare potuisse." — Melanc. Apol. Conf. c. 7. s. 12.

commission, is what is really divine in the ministry, and that the two are not, by Christ's institution, inseparable. Scripture leads him to believe that wherever the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments rightly administered, there will be a portion of Christ's mystical body; and that Christ will not leave that portion of His body without pastors spiritually qualified to minister to it. Ministers are given for the sake of the Church, not the Church for the sake of the ministry. He would conclude, therefore, that when a Luther, or a Calvin, driven from the existing visible Church by the hostility of its bishops to the Gospel, perceived, in the separate communions which they were compelled to establish, men spiritually qualified, as far as human eye could discern, for the edifying of the body of Christ, they did right in recognizing the gift of Christ, and setting such apart to the ministry by the apostolic rite of imposition of hands with prayer. In this they could not doubt that they were acting as the Apostles themselves would have acted under similar circumstances. Christ had given them pastors: their part was to send them into the vineyard. The Catholic bishop himself could do no more than this. To sum up briefly: — the Protestant admits that the ministerial commission was intended to be perpetuated in an uninterrupted visible succession from the Apostles, and that where such a succession exists, the ministry is in its proper normal state: but he cannot admit that the true essence of the ministry lies in the visible succession, any more than he can admit that the true essence of the Church lies in its ritual or polity; and consequently he does not venture to pronounce those churches which, from whatever cause, have lost the succession, to be without a legitimate ministry or efficacious sacraments. The Protestant impugns neither the fact nor the (general) necessity of the visible succession; while the Romanist would hardly maintain that nothing enters into the idea of a minister of the New Testament save the outward commission: the difference is, that the former lays more stress upon the inward preparation of the heart, which is the gift of God; the latter upon the external vocation, which comes from man: just as, to recur to the opposite conceptions which they entertain of the Church itself, the Protestant regards the living faith wrought in the hearts of Christians by the Holy Ghost as the specific difference of the body of Christ, while the Romanist assigns the same place to its external characteristics.

CHAPTER II.

THE POWERS OF THE CLERGY.

The discussion hitherto has related to the abstract questions of the mode in which the ministerial office comes into existence, the law of its perpetuation, and the sense in which it is directly of divine institution: we have now to inquire into the nature of the ministerial office itself, or the relation in which the persons formally invested with it stand towards the other members of the Church. Romanism invests the ministers of the Gospel with a twofold character, which the Protestant cannot, except in a modified sense, recognize as belonging to them: according to the decisions of the Council of Trent, the government of the Church is a hierarchy, or the relation of the clerical body to the Christian people is that of a secular magistracy to its subjects, and Christian ministers are mediators between God and man,—that is, are priests in the proper sense of the word.

Section I.

CHRISTIAN MINISTERS NOT "LORDS OVER GOD'S HERITAGE."

By the hierarchical tendency ascribed to the Romish system is meant, not so much the existence of differences of rank among the members of the clerical body (for in this there is nothing that militates against the principle of Protestantism), as, what the expression literally signifies, exclusive government by a priesthood. A gradation of ranks in the ministerial order, and, under a proper system of checks, an independent ministerial authority, are clearly sanctioned in Scripture, and have been proved by experience to be eminently conducive to the well-being of the Church. Indeed, wherever the Scriptural model of a Church, governed, not by a single pastor, but by its college of presbyters, is retained; wherever there is an organization of the clerical body; there must exist the

relation of superior to inferior. So it was from the first. If Timothy and Titus were not formal bishops, they were yet placed, for the time, in authority, not only over the Church at large, but over presbyters also. But the hierarchial principle, as it is embodied in Romanism, appears under a form very different from this. Not content with assigning to Christian ministers their legitimate share of power and influence, Romanism virtually merges the Church in the ministry, and makes the former a mere adjunct of the latter. Obedience to the Church signifies, in the mouth of a Romanist, implicit submission to the priesthood, to whom, he is taught to believe, Christ has committed the sole government of His Church; it being their province to command, while the duty of the laity is to render unquestioning obedience as to the representatives of Christ upon earth. In conformity with this doctrine, the administration of ecclesiastical affairs in the most important particulars — such as the appointment of pastors, the exercise of discipline, and the determining of points of doctrine — is in the hands of the priesthood, the laity being wholly excluded from any share therein.

No one who has looked into the formularies of Trent, or the writings of Romish theologians, can have failed to perceive how thoroughly this principle is interwoven with the whole system. Hence is to be explained the prominence given to the duty of obedience to the Church, — that is, to her spiritual rulers, and the characteristic application of terms derived from civil magistracy to express the relation of pastors and people; the former being the principes and optimates, &c., the latter the plebs, of the ecclesiastical commonwealth. Spiritual illumination being, according to the Romish theory, not the property of the whole body, but the prerogative of the priestly caste, the laity is necessarily regarded as in a state of spiritual childhood, under a paternal, but despotic government; and it would be contrary to all the analogies of nature, to entrust a share in the administration of affairs to those whose spiritual discernment is supposed to be so immature: no earthly parent consults his children in laying down rules for the management of his household; no ruler of a rude and ignorant people deems it necessary to seek their concurrence in framing the laws by which they are to be governed. To prevent anomalies of this kind, the divine Head of the Church, we are told, has committed to the priesthood — his organs and representatives — a plenary commission to decide authoritatively in controversies of faith, to enact laws, and to inflict ecclesiastical censures, unfettered by any will but their own. The hierarchism of Rome is the na-

tural, and inevitable, consequence of the doctrine that the clergy are, κατ' ἐξοχήν, the Church.

A commission to make laws without the means of enforcing obedience to them would obviously be a mockery; an imperfection which we cannot conceive as existing in a divine system. In point of fact, ample powers have been lodged in the hands of the spiritual fatherhood for the purpose of enforcing obedience to their mandates, and subduing that unwillingness to submit to their corrective discipline which the corrupt tendencies of human nature may be expected, from time to time, to produce. To the priesthood has been committed the power of the keys, by means of which the kingdom of heaven is either opened or shut, as need may require. The priest has but to "retain" the sins of the penitent, by refusing him absolution, and no pardon can be obtained from heaven: while excommunication is complete abscission from Christ. It is not without reason that the potestas jurisdictionis, or power over the mystical body of Christ, conferred on the priest at his ordination, is by Romish writers placed in the power of absolution; for obviously this single "nerve of discipline," as the council of Trent calls it, is sufficient, in all ordinary cases, to crush the incipient symptoms of an insubordinate spirit. Few among the laity will be found hardy enough to rebel, when the penalty may be eternal perdition.

It was not without exciting considerable dissatisfaction in various quarters, that the Tridentine canons on the subject of Hierarchy were promulgated. That Christian instinct, which has never wholly disappeared from the Romish church, even in its worst times, and which was now quickened by contact with Protestantism, revolted at the despotic power claimed for the pope over the bishops, for the bishops over their clergy, and for the whole priesthood over the laity. The very name, it was remarked, of a hierarchy carried with it an unchristian sound: the New Testament describes the clergy as the ministers, or servants, of the Christian people, not their governors.* But these protests were unavailing. Gallican Romanism indeed made a successful stand against the entire concentration of ecclesiastical power in the papacy; but to admit the laity to an effective share in the government of the Church was an idea as much opposed to the principles of Bossuet

"L'on ajoutait même que si l'on eût voulu se conformer au style et la conduite de Jésus Christi, de ses apôtres, ou de l'ancienne église, on n'eût pas dû se servir du terme de Hiérarchie, mais de ceux de Hiérodiaconie ou de Hiérodulie, qui indiquent un ministère et non un empire."—Sarpi. tom. iii. p. 69.

as to those of Bellarmin. The latter sums up the Romish doctrine on the relation of the clergy to the laity as follows: "It has always been believed in the Catholic church, that the bishops in their diocese, and the Roman pontiff in the whole church, are real ecclesiastical princes; competent, by their own authority, and without the consent of the people or the advice of the presbyters, to enact laws binding upon the conscience, to judge in causes ecclesiastical, like other" (secular) "judges, and, if need be, to inflict punishment" (upon gainsayers).* Romanism, however, is not without its popular element, which consists in this, that "there is no one of the Christian commonalty but may become a member of the episcopate, or governing body,"†

The restoration, in theory at least, of the laity to their proper place in the Church, was an immediate consequence of the reformation. By reasserting the two great scriptural doctrines of the universal priesthood of Christians, and of the indwelling of the Spirit, not in a priestly caste, but in the whole body of the faithful, Luther and his contemporaries shook the edifice of sacerdotal usurpation to its base, and recovered for the Christian laity the rights of which they had been unlawfully deprived. Justification by faith robbed the confessional of its terrors, and the priest of his most formidable engine of tyranny,—the assumed power of remitting and retaining sins. The Church ceased to be a synonome for the clergy, and an inquiring age investigated and disallowed the claim of the latter to be the special repositories of spiritual illumination. The change was indeed "like life from the dead." The lay members of the body of Christ emerged from the spiritual imbecility which they had been taught to regard as their natural state, and became free, not from the yoke of Christ, but from that of the priest. A reaction of sentiment so great would naturally give rise to occasional excesses on the other side; and in some instances the recovered liberty of the Church ran wild into license. In others, the legitimate functions of the laity, though acknowledged in articles and confessions, were never actually restored; the secular government, as the representative of the Christian people at large, being made the repository of those powers which were formerly exercised by the Roman pontiff or his delegates. The proper adjustment and admixture of lay and clerical influence is a problem which yet remains to be solved by most of the reformed churches of Europe. But to return to the point under discussion.

* De Rom. Pont. l. iv. c. 15. † Bellarm. Ibid. l. iv. c. 15.

It is needless to say that the assumption by which the exclusive hierarchism of the Romish church seeks to justify itself,—viz. that the clergy constitute the Church κατ' ἐξοχήν—is wholly groundless. The distinction between laity and clergy is—if we assign to the latter term its strict meaning—an unscriptural one. In St. Peter's view, the whole Church, and not any particular part of it, is the Lord's clerisy, or peculiar portion:* nor do any of the sacred writers speak of the ministry's being more essential to the Church than the Church is to the ministry. There is indeed a sense in which the distinction just mentioned is admissible; but in this legitimate sense it merely means that in the Church there exists a diversity of spiritual gifts, and that some members of it possess ministerial gifts, while the rest do not, who, however, may possess other endowments equally necessary to the well-being of the Christian body. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Scripture, far from making the ministers of Christ the mere organs of the congregation, everywhere invests them with an independent and effective authority. They are described as "leaders" of the flock, to whom obedience is due; as "overseers" of the church of God; and the charges given to Timothy and Titus, in their simply ministerial capacity, to "rebuke sharply," "to command and teach," and to "reject" the contumacious and self-willed, prove that authority of no contemptible kind was committed to their hands. The very warning which St. Peter addresses to the presbyters, not to "lord it over the flock," presupposes the possession by them of powers which they might be tempted to abuse. In short, no principle of ecclesiastical polity is more clearly deducible from Scripture than that the sovereignty of a church resides not in the people apart from their pastors. This, however, being admitted, the converse also remains true, that the sovereignty of a church is not in the pastors exclusively of the people. The proper adjustment of lay and clerical influence depends upon the maintenance of three important rules commended to us by apostolic precedent; which, while they trench not upon the legitimate authority of the ministerial order, counteract, wherever they are in operation, the growth of hierarchical despotism.

The first is, the free admission of the laity to the deliberative assemblies of the Church. Nothing can be more contrary either to the spirit or the letter of the New Testament than that ecclesiastical synods should be composed of the clergy alone. This

* Μηδ' ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων.—1 Pet. v. 3.

appears both from the general structure of the apostolic epistles, which, while treating upon all points of doctrine and discipline, are addressed, not to the clergy only, but to the Church at large, and from the precedent of the apostolic council held at Jerusalem, which we may presume to have been intended to be the model of such assemblies in after ages. In that council, "the whole church," consisting of apostles, elders, and brethren, came together for the purpose of deliberation; and the decree ran in the name of the whole community.

It would be interesting, were this the place for such a discussion, to trace the steps by which the apostolic model of an ecclesiastical assembly was gradually departed from, until at length not only were the laity, but the presbyters and deacons also, excluded from any real share in the government of the Church. The synodal system, in itself beneficial and indeed necessary, was the proximate cause of the change. When dioceses became consolidated into provinces, it was as natural that there should be provincial as it had formerly been that there should be diocesan synods. The latter for a long time retained that popular element which is the proper counterpoise of sacerdotal influence. Even Cyprian, the chief promoter of episcopal authority, declares it to have been his rule, from the time that he became a bishop, to do nothing without the advice of his presbyters, and the consent of his people.* "Common decency," he writes to his clergy, "as well as our rule of discipline and manner of" (church) "life, requires that we, the bishops, assembling with the clergy, and in the presence of the steadfast laity, to whom, on account of their faith and obedience, due consideration is to be shown, should settle all matters by piously consulting together."† But in the provincial synods, to which the more important questions were referred for consideration, it soon became the practice for the bishops only, as representatives of their respective churches, to be formally summoned; the presbyters, if any such attended, appearing merely as followers of their bishop, while the laity were virtually excluded. For though the doors of the synod were not at first absolutely closed against lay persons, yet the latter, inasmuch as they sent to it no formal representatives, were present, if any did gain admittance, more as spectators than as a constituent part of the assembly. At length, in the greater councils, whether provincial or general, the whole administrative

* Epist. 5. Ad Presbyt. et Diac. † Epist. 13. Ad Cler.

power became concentrated in the bishops: they alone possessed the right of voting; and if a few presbyters and laics were still found in attendance, it was only for the purpose of discharging certain subordinate functions. * The decisions of a council thus constituted became binding upon the whole province, or the whole church, as the case might be; and each bishop returned to his own diocese to enforce decrees, in the framing of which neither presbyters nor people had had any share. The government of the Church had become an oligarchy of the most exclusive description.

It is easy to say, in justification of this departure from apostolic practice, that, inasmuch as the bishop, being one with his people, and his people with him, cannot be conceived of apart from them, the laity were, in fact, present at synods in and through their bishops: they were represented in him. † But considerations of this refined and mystical kind are not found, in practice, to operate very strongly. A clerical corporation, like every other, naturally and insensibly tends to its own aggrandizement; and this without perceiving the motives which influence it. Nothing would be more unjust than to attribute to the bishops of the third and fourth centuries a systematic design to make their own order the exclusive repository of spiritual power: such nevertheless was the actual result of their measures. The love of power, disguising itself under a variety of forms, was always at work; and the most pious bishops had little difficulty in persuading themselves that, in seeking to augment the influence of the episcopate, they were promoting the interests of the Church at large. Not unfrequently indeed the circumstances of the time were such as to call for, on the part of the bishop, the most vigorous exercise of the prerogatives which his office conferred upon him, in order to prevent the Church from becoming a scene of anarchy and disorder; a fact which accounts for, if it does not justify, the expressions which meet us in the pages of Ignatius and Cyprian. The picture which the epistles of the latter present of that singular class of persons, the "confessors," of their spiritual arrogance, and contempt of lawful authority, is sufficient to prove that nothing but the utmost

* "At Catholicorum sententia est, solos prælatos majores eosque omnes, id est, episcopos, in conciliis generalibus et provincialibus habere jus suffragii decisivi ordinarie: ex presbyteris autem et aliis clericis minoribus tantum vocari aliquos viros doctos, qui juvent in disputando vel aliis ministeriis: denique ex privatis laicis tantum vocari aliquos qui videantur utiles, vel necessarii ad aliquod ministerium concilii." Bellarm. de Concil. lib. i. c. 15.

† Moehler, Einheit in der Kirche, p. 211.

stretch of that authority could have availed to keep them within bounds. The position, however, which individual bishops were thus led to assume, and the claims which they put forward, were never abandoned when the circumstances which had given rise to them ceased: assumptions which were forced upon Cyprian became the ordinary style of his successors: every contest between the presbyters, or the laity, and the bishops, terminated in favour of the latter: and thus by continual accretions, each small in itself, the hierarchical system attained those gigantic proportions which it exhibited in the middle ages. *

No Church can be in a healthy condition which excludes from the administration of its affairs any constituent part of the body ecclesiastic. They who feel that they are regarded not as a part of Christ's body, but as an appendage to the priesthood, will naturally cease to feel an interest in the preservation and purity of the Church; and a spirit of indifference, perhaps the most foreign of all tempers to the Gospel, will take the place of that hearty sympathy and co-operation which springs from a felt identification of interests. There can be no genuine church feeling, where there is no church life; and there can be no church life where the relation of pastors and people resembles that of governors and subjects, or where one order of the clerical body absorbs in itself the powers which belong to the whole, and can enact laws without the concurrence, and even against the will, of the other orders. It is our Lord's injunction that the spirit in which civil government is carried on should be banished from the community of his

* The statements of Ignatius on Episcopacy have usually been thought to overstep the limits of sobriety; but they are mild when compared with those of the Apostolical Constitutions. From these spurious, but very ancient, compositions the reader may form an accurate notion of the prevailing cast of theological sentiment towards the beginning of the fourth century. Their spuriousness detracts nothing frem their value in this respect, for the writer, whoever he may have been, must be supposed faithfully to reflect the opinions of his age. To bishops the Constitutions assign the following prerogatives: — To mediate between God and man, and to represent God upon earth: *ὁ ἐπίσκοπος . . . . μεσίτης Θεοῦ καὶ ὑμῶν ἐν ταῖς πρὸς αὐτὸν λατρείαις . . . . δι' ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος ἀναγεννήσας ὑμᾶς εἰς υἱοθεσίαν . . . . οὗτος ὑμῶν βασιλεὺς καὶ δυνάστης, οὗτος ὑμῶν ἐπίγειος Θεὸς μετὰ Θεόν.* — L. 2. c. 66. *Εἰ οὖν ἐβρέθη Μωυσῆς ὑπὸ Κυρίου Θεὸς, καὶ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐπίσκοπος εἰς Θεὸν τετιμήσθω, καὶ ὁ διάκονος ὡς τροφήτης αὐτοῦ.* — Ibid. c. 30. To possess the keys of heaven and hell: *οὗτοι γὰρ παρὰ Θεῷ ζωῆς καὶ θανάτου ἐξουσίαν εἰλήφασιν ἐν τῷ δικάζειν τοὺς ἡμαρτηκότας καὶ καταδικάζειν εἰς θάνατον πυρὸς αἰωνίου, καὶ λύειν ἁμαρτιῶν τοὺς ἐπιστρέφοντας, καὶ ζωογονεῖν αὐτούς.* — Ibid. c. 33. To be sole judges between Christians: *τοῖς γὰρ ἱερεῦσιν* (i. e. the bishops) *ἐπετράπη κρίνειν μόνοις· ὅτι εἴρηται αὐτοῖς, Κρίμα δίκαιον κρίνετε.* — (Deut. i. 26. and 16. 18.) Ibid. c. 36. And to be superior to temporal sovereigns: *Τούτους ἄρχοντας ὑμῶν καὶ βασιλεῖς ἡγεῖσθαι νομίζετε, καὶ δασμοὺς ὡς βασιλεῦσι προσφέρετε . . . . ὅσῳ τοίνυν ψυχὴ σώματος κρείττων, τοσούτῳ ἱερωσύνη βασιλείας.* — Ibid. c. 34.

followers; that nothing resembling a secular lordship (*οἱ βασιλεῖς τῶν ἐθνῶν κυριεύουσιν αὐτῶν*) should find a place in his Church. To exclude this evil is hardly possible where the councils of the Church are composed exclusively of clerical persons, sitting in secret conclave, and jealously refusing to admit the laity to a share in their deliberations.

The second point in which the laity have joint rights with the clergy is in the appointment of pastors; not in the transmission of the ministerial commission (for this, as we have seen, is the peculiar prerogative of the clergy), but in the local settlement of the pastor. The rule which Scripture furnishes on this point is, that no pastor is to be placed over a Church without its consent having been previously obtained thereto. In the Romish system this regulation would, obviously, be an anomaly. For the laity being there regarded as in a state of spiritual pupilage, and, therefore, unable to discern what is best for their spiritual interests, to seek their concurrence in the institution of him who is to be over them in the Lord would be as unwise as unnecessary: a right like this can be safely entrusted to those only who have attained to some maturity of Christian knowledge, and spiritual wisdom.

There is no point of apostolic order which seems more easy of establishment than the one of which we are now speaking. The first occasion on which, after our Lord's ascension, an election to an ecclesiastical office took place was that on which a successor to Judas Iscariot was to be chosen. The mode of proceeding in this instance deserves notice. If in any case it might have seemed allowable to dispense with the concurrence of the people in ecclesiastical appointments, this was such a case: that Apostles only should fill up the vacancy in the apostolical college, so peculiar in its functions, so much elevated by spiritual endowments above the rest of the Church, would appear but reasonable. Yet on no other occasion is there a more express mention made of popular intervention. The disciples, not the Apostles alone, being assembled together to the number of a hundred and twenty, Peter, in an address directed to the whole assembly, introduces the subject. At his suggestion, "they"—that is, the Apostles and disciples—"appointed" two individuals as the best fitted for the vacant office; and referring the decisive selection between the two to the Lord Himself, they all "prayed," and "gave forth their lots."* The same course was pursued in the first appointment of deacons. The Apostles brought the matter before "the multitude of the

* Acts, i. 23–26.

disciples," directing them to choose out among themselves those whom they should judge best qualified for the new office: the multitude make the selection, and present the persons selected to the Apostles, for the purpose of receiving the imposition of their hands.* It is true that if, as some have thought,† those seven ministers of the Church of Jerusalem were not deacons, properly so called,—that is, as that term was afterwards understood—but lay administrators of the revenues of the Church, the transaction no longer constitutes a precedent for the principle of which we are speaking; but, on the other hand, it becomes one for the equally important rule, that, in the administration of church affairs, and especially in the management of the funds of the Church, the laity should have a part, either personally or by their representatives. Thus, in whatever point of view we choose to regard the appointment of Stephen and his companions, it is adverse to the clerical exclusiveness of the Romish system.

Passing onwards in the history of the early Church we read that, in locating ministers in the newly planted churches of Asia, Paul and Barnabas took the suffrages of the people; and in this way, "ordained them elders in every church:" conceding to each society the power of selection, but reserving to themselves the right of approval and institution. The remark that the word *χειροτονήσαντες*, which is the one that occurs in the passage alluded to, is often used to signify the simple act of appointing, and need not necessarily mean appointing with the consent of others, is a just one; but it is better, where there is no reason, as there is none here, for departing from it, to adhere to the natural, and original, signification of the word, which is, to appoint officers by means of suffrage;‡ especially when the practice of the Apostles on other occasions is in favour of this interpretation. It may be added that the notices which the New Testament contains concerning the rule by which the Apostles guided themselves in the settlement of pastors are confirmed by the weighty testimony of Clement of Rome: "Those," he writes, "whom either the Apostles or other distinguished men" (their delegates) "placed in the ministry, with the consent of the whole Church" (that is, of each particular church), "it is not right to depose from their office," &c.§

* Acts, vi. 2–6. † Bilson, Perpet. Gov. &c. pp. 109, 110.

‡ See Wahl's Lexicon, *χειροτονεῖν*, and the examples of the use of the word there given. In the sense in which it is used by later ecclesiastical writers,—viz. "to lay hands upon,"—it does not occur in the New Testament.

§ *Τοὺς οὖν κατασταθέντας ὑπ' ἐκείνων, ἢ μεταξὺ ὑφ' ἑτέρων ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν, συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης*, &c.,—1 Epist. s. 44. For several centuries after the Christian era, the

The third, and perhaps the most important of the rights which belong to the laity, relates to the exercise of discipline. That the power of inflicting church censures is to be vested not in the clerical body alone, but in the whole Church, rests on the clearest evidence of Scripture. The final court of appeal which our Lord, speaking by anticipation, establishes in cases of disagreement among Christians, is "the Church,"—*i. e.* the whole congregation; conferring at the same time, upon "the Church" the power of enforcing its decrees by the penalty of excommunication. By the Romish controversialists, and the fathers before them, we are told that by "the Church" in this passage is meant the rulers of the Church; and it may be admitted that to the presiding bishop, or elders, it ordinarily appertains to pronounce, and carry out, the decree of expulsion. As long as the legislative power resides in the whole society, so that no decision in matters of discipline can be come to without the consent of the people, there is no danger, and a manifest propriety, in permitting the clerical body, or a particular member of it, to be the organ of the community in promulgating, and executing, its decrees. But this is not what is really meant. The object is to make it appear, contrary to the plain meaning of the words, that the power of inflicting church censures is lodged exclusively in the hands of the clergy; whereas it is "the Church,"—the whole society under the presidency of its pastors—that is to adjudicate upon the case, and pronounce sentence.

The rule which the Apostles prescribed to themselves may be gathered from the case of the incestuous Corinthian (1 Cor. v.). St. Paul, after reproving the Corinthians for their laxity of discipline, informs them that, by virtue of that apostolic authority which was not confined to any one Christian society, but extended over the whole Church, he had resolved to deliver the offender "to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit" might "be saved;" superseding, apparently, for the time being, the regular authorities of the Church. Yet, although it is an Apostle, and not an ordinary bishop, or college of elders, that here enforces discipline, he assumes not to himself the power of acting independently of the Church: on the contrary, he regards what he is about to do as the joint act of himself and the society. It was when the

church carefully observed the Apostolic rule on this point. "Propter quod plebs obsequens præceptis dominicis et Deum metuens a peccatore præposito separare se debet, nec se ad sacrilegi sacerdotis sacrificia miscere, quando ipsa maxime habeat potestatem vel eligendi dignos sacerdotes vel indignos recusandi."—Cyp. Epist. 68. See also Apost. Constit. l. 8. c. 4.

Church was "gathered together," he being "present in spirit," that the sentence of excommunication was to be carried into effect.* In the second epistle, too, he speaks of the transaction as a "punishment inflicted by many" (2 Cor. ii. 6.).

From this we learn wherein resides the sovereignty of a Christian society. Of all ecclesiastical acts, the enforcement of penalties, and especially the expulsion of a member, is the most sovereign: indeed the latter is the only sovereign act which a church, as such, can perform. It is the ultimate penalty for ecclesiastical offences, and corresponds to the excision of a corrupt member from the body politic by capital punishment; an act in performing which the sovereignty of the state is especially exhibited. The infliction of secular pains and penalties being interdicted, excommunication, with its spiritual consequences, is the only means to which, in the last resort, a Christian society can have recourse for the purpose of enforcing obedience to its regulations; and the power of excommunication belonging, according to apostolic rule, not to the clergy alone, but to the whole society, it follows that the sovereignty of a church resides not in the clergy apart from the people, or in the people apart from their pastors, but in the whole community, composed of people and pastors.

Wherever the clergy possess an uncontrolled power of inflicting church censures, it is next to impossible but that a spiritual despotism, of a most oppressive kind, will be the result. The two dogmas, that the sovereignty of the Church is in the priesthood, and that the priest is the representative of Christ, empowered to remit or retain sins, to open or bar access to God, were sufficient to enslave the mind of Europe, both spiritually and intellectually, for a thousand years. Nor, were they now to gain a footing amongst us, would they be found to have lost aught of their inherent power. Under such a system, the spiritual governors of the Church, invested with powers from which there is no appeal save, perhaps, an appeal to a tribunal composed exclusively of their own order, and without the salutary check of lay influence, may enact what laws, and annex to those laws what sanctions, they please; while for the laity there is no safety but in abject submission. For over the refractory hangs the rod of ecclesiastical censure, wielded by an order which, as experience has shown, can with difficulty resist the temptation to use the power committed to it, more for the advancement of its own supposed interests than for the welfare of the Church at large.

* 1 Cor. v. 4.

Section II.

CHRISTIAN MINISTERS NOT PRIESTS.

If the relation of pastors to people is not that of governors to subjects, still less is the Christian ministry a proper priesthood. To discuss this important subject in all its bearings would be inconsistent with the limits of a work like the present, besides which its position in the Romish system can only be fully understood when it is considered in connexion with its correlative, — the proper sacrifice of the Eucharist. Little more will here be attempted than to examine how far Scripture warrants the statement that there exists under the Gospel dispensation a human priesthood.

It is difficult to determine to which we are to assign priority in point of time, the transformation of the Lord's Supper into a sacrifice, or that of the Christian ministry into a priesthood. The Council of Trent, as might be expected, adopts the former hypothesis, arguing that since Christ appointed the visible sacrifice of the Eucharist, there must needs be a priesthood to administer it;* but it seems more probable that the notion of a Christian priesthood was historically antecedent to, and the parent of, the corresponding doctrine concerning the Eucharist. As has been already observed, the cessation of the temple services at Jerusalem was, in all probability, the signal for the more open manifestation of those Judaizing tendencies which had long been leavening the mind of the Church; and the natural result of the custom which arose of designating Christian ministers by the terms proper to the Levitical priesthood would be the actual transfer to them of sacerdotal functions. But since a priesthood must have a sacrifice to offer, it was inevitable that the Eucharist, in which a commemoration is made of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, should in due time be transmuted into a real propitiatory offering.

To whichever dogma we choose to assign priority of time, there is no element of Romanism of more ancient date. It may well be called the *πρῶτον ψεῦδος* of the Church system. Already, by Ignatius, the Lord's table is commonly termed "the altar," and even

* Sess. 23. cap. 1.

the more scriptural Clement compares Christian ministers to the high priest, priests, and Levites, * though perhaps only by way of illustration or analogy. Later writers transfer the terms belonging to the old dispensation to Christianity in a manner so habitual and unconscious as to prove that the sacrificial theory had become thoroughly incorporated with the Christianity of the age. In truth, it is not too much to say that for none of the articles of the Apostles' Creed could stronger and more universal testimony be produced from antiquity than that which exists for the dogma of a human priesthood under the Gospel. Whether we turn to the east or west, to the pages of Chrysostom or of Augustin, we find it everywhere acknowledged and taught. If Vincentius's rule — quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus — is to be so understood that, *Scripture, the first link in the chain of written tradition, being excluded,* whatever can be proved to have been universally, and from the first, taught by the fathers is to be received as part of the apostolic deposit of doctrine, there is no question but that the dogma alluded to possesses the strongest claims to be so received.

The decisions of the Council of Trent on this subject are as follows: — Sacrifice and priesthood are by the appointment of God so connected, that in every dispensation both have been found to exist. Since, therefore, the new covenant possesses a visible sacrifice, appointed by Christ Himself, — viz. that of the Eucharist — it was necessary that there should also be establisned a visible and external priesthood, succeeding to that of the old dispensation. The Christian priesthood was instituted by our Lord in the persons of His Apostles, upon whom He conferred the power of consecrating and offering up His body and blood, and of remitting and retaining sins: from the Apostles this power has descended to their successors. In the sacrament of orders, which is the rite of consecration to the priest's office, a new spiritual position, or standing, is conferred, which is necessary to the validity of sacerdotal acts. At the same time, and by the same ordinance, an ineffaceable impression, or character, is stamped upon the inner man; so that it is as impossible for a Christian priest to revert to the condition of a layman as it would have been for a Jewish priest to undo the fact of his natural birth. This impressed character is what constitutes, amidst the varying phases of the visible Church, the identity of the priestly line; just as the true personality of the Levitical priest-

* Epist. 1. s. 40.

hood, under every form of the Jewish commonwealth, lay in its descent from Aaron.*

It is easy to see why the "impressed character" was attached to the sacrament of orders, as well as to those of baptism and confirmation. From the character impressed in three out of the seven sacraments, there is supposed to arise a *specific* difference of spiritual standing in those upon whom it is impressed, whereby they are distinguished from their brethren in Christ, or from unbelievers. Thus by the character impressed in baptism, the baptized person is transferred from the kingdom of Satan to that of Christ; in confirmation he is enlisted under the banner of Christ, the spiritual mark which he receives corresponding to a military brand, or the stamp which a shepherd impresses upon his sheep, so that by means of it the Church is enabled to recognise, and claim as deserters, those who renounce her authority; and by the sacrament of orders, he becomes a member of the priestly caste, whose office it is to mediate between their brethren and God. It has already been remarked that the devolution of sacerdotal powers in a line of visible succession, commonly by natural birth, is a characteristic of religious systems which are intended to operate from without inwards; it may be added that such systems always assign to the priesthood, as compared with the rest of the worshippers, a specific difference of standing in relation to the Deity worshipped. The priesthood alone has immediate access to the divine presence; by the priesthood alone the Deity declares His will; the people hold converse with the Deity mediately, through the priest: such is the sacerdotal system, as it existed in the various pagan forms of religion, and in the preparatory dispensation of the law. Under the law there existed not merely differences of function, or office (these still exist under the Gospel), but differences of nearness to God, according as the worshipper was a priest, or not of the priesthood. And this specific difference of position was notified, as became a symbolical system, by the simple fact of natural birth; the mediating instrument being by this means distinctly defined, and visibly separated from the rest of the Lord's people. Under the new law, as befits its more spiritual nature, the outward distinction of natural birth has given place to one of an internal, psychological, character; and the Christian priest receives at ordination an impressed character, or inward disposition (in the passive sense of the word), which is indelible, and which raises him to a higher level in respect

* Sess. 23. cap. 1. Ibid. Can. 1–6.

of access to God than that which the Christian commonality occupies. It must be remembered that the impressed character has nothing moral in it, and may exist in those who have no sanctifying faith.

But to return:—the speedy and universal corruption of the Gospel upon this capital point is, if we consider the energetic manner in which the Judaizing tendencies of the Apostolic age were met by the Apostles, and especially by St. Paul, and the marked silence of Scripture upon the sacerdotal character of Christian ministers, one of the most striking facts in ecclesiastical history. In dealing with the subject on Scriptural grounds, the protestant feels himself embarrassed, not by the poverty, but by the abundance of the evidence which proves that the doctrine of a human priesthood is irreconcileable with the spirit and the letter of Apostolic Christianity. This was acknowledged at the council of Trent by a candid Portuguese theologian, who counselled the fathers to abandon the endeavour to prove the point from Scripture, and to rest the weight of the argument upon the testimony of tradition.* The doctrine of the Apostles on the subject of priesthood is as follows:—

The idea of a mediator between God and man springs naturally from the consciousness which exists on man's part of being, by nature, in a state of alienation from God. Wherever the idea of God, as a being of infinite holiness, is not quite lost, man shrinks from directly approaching the divine presence; his feeling being that expressed in the words of Simon Peter, "depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Hence every form of paganism, of ancient or modern times, had its priests, or certain persons supposed to be divinely authorized to mediate between the deity worshipped and His worshippers. To these persons, thus invested

* Géorge d' Ataide. His observations, as recorded by Sarpi, are worth transcribing: — Il dit d'abord: Qu'on ne pouvoit pas douter que la messe ne fût un sacrifice, puisque les pères l'avoient enseigné ouvertement, et l'avoient répété en toute occasion. Il rapporta sur cela les temoignages des pères grecs et latins de la primitive église, et des anciens martyrs; et parcourant ensuite tous les siècles jusqu'au nôtre, il soutint qu'il n'y avoit aucun écrivain chrétien qui n'eût appellé l'eucharistie un sacrifice; et conclut qu'on devoit regarder cette doctrine comme venant certainement d'une tradition apostolique, qui étoit un fondement suffisant pour établir un article de foi, comme le concil l'avoit enseigné des le commencement. Mais il ajouta: que c'étoit affoiblir ce fondement, que de lui en joindre d'imaginaires; et qu'en voulant trouver dans l'écriture ce qui n'y étoit pas, on donnoit occasion de calomnier la vérité à ceux qui voyoient qu'on l'appuyoit sur un sable aussi mouvant. De-là il passa à examiner l'un après l'autre les endroits de l'ancien et du nouveau Testament rapportés par les théologiens, et montra qu'il n'y avoit aucun, dont on pût tirer une preuve claire du sacrifice. — Sarpi, vol. ii. p. 384. The historian adds that this theologian's presence at the council was thenceforward dispensed with.

with an official sanctity, it was felt to be a relief to delegate those acts of religious homage which the worshipper himself shrank from performing.

What natural feeling had spontaneously prompted received in the Jewish economy a divine sanction, a human priesthood having been appointed by God to mediate between Himself and His people. The reason of this appointment was that, under the elder dispensation, sin, though it was susceptible of pardon through prospective faith in the promised Saviour was not actually taken away; and therefore the way into the holiest — the immediate presence of God — was not yet made manifest, or laid open, to all believers. Christ had not yet become incarnate; God and man were not, as yet, brought into perfect union in the person of Immanuel; redemption, though determined in the counsels of God, was not yet accomplished: consequently, all that could be vouchsafed to the believer under the law was a typical or symbolical, representation (*σκιαν τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν*), sufficient to excite hope and confidence towards God, of the fulness of spiritual privilege which belongs to the Christian.* Hence an earthly priesthood and animal sacrifices were incorporated in the Mosaic law; the felt insufficiency of the latter leading, as we must suppose, the reflecting Jew to infer the typical, and transitory, character of the former.

Christianity does not abrogate the idea of priesthood; on the contrary, it exhibits the fulfilment of the unconscious vaticinations of heathenism, and the substance of the divinely appointed

* It is worthy of remark that the advocates of a human priesthood under the Gospel are driven, by the stress of their own reasonings, to do away with the essential difference between the state of the Jewish and the Christian believer. Thus a recent writer argues that, "if it be said that a Christian priesthood is needless, because the work of mediation is discharged by Christ alone, the answer is, that such an argument proves a Jewish priesthood to have been useless also. If it be added that a Christian priesthood interferes with the sole merits of Christ, by providing another way of approaching to God, why then did not the Jewish priesthood the same?" and much more to the same effect. — Wilberforce on the Incarnation &c., p. 386. The argument proceeds throughout upon the supposition that under the Law, no less than under the Gospel, the mediation of Christ, in the full and proper sense of the word, was exercised, — that is, in other words, that Christ was then incarnate, sin taken away, and the Spirit given. It is no answer to say that, *prospectively*, this was the case; the prospective nature of the faith of the Jew, — the mere anticipation, as contrasted with the enjoyment, of Gospel privileges, — is the very thing that distinguishes religion under the Law from religion under the Gospel. The fact that what was vouchsafed to the Jew was the mere promise which awaited its accomplishment, of a sufficient sacrifice, and an effective mediation, is the very circumstance that made a typical priesthood and sacrifices then both possible and beneficial. But thus it always is. They who would reduce the Christian to the level of the Jew are constrained, in order to be consistent, to make the Jew a Christian.

symbolism of the Old Testament. The teaching of the New Testament upon this point is as follows: the whole of the Jewish ceremonial law was of a typical character, and prefigured the work and offices of the Saviour who was to come. The legal sacrifices pointed to the one great sacrifice to be offered up upon the cross; the Levitical priesthood was a type of the heavenly priesthood of Christ. He it is, the object both of type and prophecy, who is the true priest and mediator between God and man. Through Him all Christians have direct and immediate access to God. As we need not, so we have not, any other priest, any other advocate with the Father. For the anti-type being come, the type necessarily ceases, the reality supersedes the figure. Truth, as well as grace, came by Jesus Christ; that true fellowship of the Christian with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of which the whole of the national ritual of the Jew was but a symbolical adumbration.

Such is the testimony of Scripture, and especially of that portion of it which is specially designed to instruct us in the relation which the Aaronic priesthood bore to that of Christ,—the epistle to the Hebrews. This inspired commentary upon the Levitical law not only declares that a human priesthood does not exist under the Gospel, but explains why such an institution is no longer necessary;—viz. that Christ Himself, in His priestly office, is a real and all-sufficient mediator between God and man. "If perfection were by the Levitical priesthood"—*i. e.* a human one,—"what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchisedec" (His office being eternal and unchangeable), "and not be called after the order of Aaron?" (in the line of the visible succession.)* "If He were upon earth, He should not be a priest," (for He was not of the tribe of Levi, and while the Jewish temple stood, the priesthood was confined to that tribe; an argument which equally proves that His apostles—the first link in the chain of the Christian ministry—were not priests, several of them, to say the least, not belonging to the tribe of Levi,) "seeing that there are priests that offer gifts and sacrifices according to the law: who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,"† those "heavenly things" being, not a new Christian priesthood, but Christ's own priestly office exercised by Him in heaven. The exercise of Christ's priestly office at the right hand of God dates, not from the beginning, but from that

* Heb. vii. 11. † Ibid. viii. 4, 5.

time, when, "being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands,—that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of bulls and goats, but by his own blood,—he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us;"* by which great event a new order of things was introduced, superseding, and rendering unnecessary, the ancient priesthood, and every institution of a similar nature. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also in the law;" and that the ancient priesthood is abrogated is "evident, for that after the similitude of Melchisedec, there ariseth another," not priesthood, but "priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life."†

"As every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, it is of necessity that this man have somewhat to offer;"‡ and the offering which He presented was His body, once for all, "by one offering," perfecting "for ever them that are sanctified."§ The perfection of this sacrifice forbids the supposition that it is ever to be repeated. If the Levitical sacrifices were "offered year by year," it was because they could not "make the comers thereunto perfect;" could not "purge" their "conscience from dead works, to serve the living God:" could they have done so, "would they not have ceased to be offered?"‖ "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself:"¶ "now where remission of these" (sins) "is, there is no more offering for sin;"** and therefore no longer occasion for sacrificing priests.

These statements of Scripture not only make it clear that there is in the Christian dispensation no other proper priesthood save that of Christ Himself, but prove further, that the Protestant, in rejecting the dogma of a human priesthood, by no means makes the Old Testament a dead letter to Christians, but, on the contrary, by referring its types to their proper object, infuses life and mean-

* Heb. ix. 11, 12.
† Ibid. vii. 15, 16.
‡ Ibid. viii. 3.
§ Ibid. x. 10–14.
‖ Ibid. x. 1, 2.
¶ Ibid. ix. 24–26.
** Ibid. x. 18.

ing into the otherwise "carnal ordinances" of the law. Christ Himself, not a Christian priesthood, is the true key to the Levitical ritual, which, when regarded as symbolical of His offices and work, acquires a dignity which does not otherwise belong to it. In itself. the ceremonial law was a system of "beggarly elements," unfitted for the maturity of the spiritual man; and they it is who make it typical merely of another order of priests, and an unbloody sacrifice, that, in reality, reduce it to a dead letter, unworthy of its divine Author. It is when viewed as prefigurative of the Redeemer's offices, as "the place where the Lord lay" under the veil of the ancient covenant, that the symbolical ordinances of the Law are rescued from their inherent insignificance: they shine with a reflected light, and the luminary that sheds lustre upon them is, not a new sacerdotal system adapted to Christianity, but the sun of righteousness Himself, the sole priest of His church, the fulfilment both of type and prophecy. Truly amazing, indeed, it is to those who do not recollect the affinity that exists between certain forms of religious error and the natural heart, that the ancient church, in the persons of its leading writers and bishops, should have so lost sight of the distinctive truths of the Gospel, as to reinstate in Christianity that very portion of the preparatory dispensation, which most distinctly proclaimed itself, even to the pious Jew, to be imperfect and transitory, and only valuable in that it was significant of Him who was to come.

Entirely confirmatory of their express doctrinal statements is the studied abstinence of the Apostles, when speaking of the Christian ministry, from the use of terms belonging to the Jewish law. In Scripture various terms are used to describe the office of Christian ministers, — they are pastors, rulers, teachers, ministers, evangelists: but not even once is the term Hiereus — *i. e.* sacrificing priest — applied to them, or the Eucharist spoken of as a sacrifice. We have no occasion to qualify this statement, because in the epistle to the Hebrews (c. xiii. 10.) Christians are said to "have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle;" or because St. Paul declares (Rom. xv. 16.) that he was the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, "that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable to God." Unless we are prepared to maintain that a single expression at the close of a treatise is sufficient to reverse the conclusions which the author has been throughout, and by a variety of arguments, labouring to establish, we must interpret the former of these passages so as not to contravene the main scope of the epistle which, as we have seen, is

to prove that in Christianity there is no other offering for sin but that once offered upon the cross. But where there is no repeated offering for sin, there can be no material altar; and the passage therefore can only mean that Christians, in spiritually — *i. e.* by faith — eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ — the great victim, who, "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate," — enjoy a heavenly feast, from which the adherents of the Mosaic law, forbidden as they were to taste the offerings made on the great day of atonement, were, through their very profession of obedience to the law, necessarily excluded.* In fact, as Christ is both the victim and the priest, so is He the altar also, or, rather, the victim upon the altar; which is nothing more than saying that the constituent elements, priest, altar, and sacrifice, which under the law went to make up an act of propitiatory sacrifice, are now all united in the one great Antitype. As regards the other passage; — that the Gentiles should not offer sacrifices, but themselves be offered up an acceptable sacrifice to God, was the great object of St. Paul's labours; upon this "sacrifice and service of" their "faith" he was willing to "be offered" as a libation;† but as the sacrifice was the "reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice"‡ of themselves, so the Apostle's ministration — his *λειτουγία*, or priestly function, was nothing but the preaching of the Gospel.§

The Apostles do indeed transfer the terms of the Jewish law to the Gospel, but it is in such a manner as to exhibit in the most striking manner, the modification of meaning which we must then attach to them. Instead of describing himself and his colleagues as priests, or applying the term at all to Christian ministers, St Peter declares all Christians to be "a royal priesthood," and re-

* V. 12. The argumentative force of the whole passage has not always been pointed out by commentators. The parallel is, as throughout the epistle, between the high priest and Christ, the ceremony of the great day of atonement, and the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. On ordinary occasions the bodies of the victims were assigned to the priests for their sustenance; but the offerings made on the great day of atonement were "burned without the camp" (v. 11.), not even the priests being permitted to partake of them. The Judaizing Christians, therefore, in affirming the continued obligation of the Mosaic law, did, on their own principles, exclude themselves from the spiritual banquet of Christ's body and blood, offered once for all, and to all believers; the law forbidding them to eat of the flesh of the victims offered on the day of atonement, of which the sacrifice of Christ was the acknowledged anti-type. That the word "altar" is not to be understood literally is placed beyond doubt by the nature of the sacrifices to be offered upon it, — viz. those of praise and alms-giving. See vv. 15, 16.

† Phil. ii. 17. ‡ Rom. xii. 1.

§ Εἰς τὸ εἶναί με λειτουργὸν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς τα ἔθνη, ἱερουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἵνα γένηται ἡ προσφορὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν εὐπρόσδεκτος, &c.

gards the congregation, not the pastors, as the Lord's portion, or clergy.* All Christians are priests, not in the figurative sense in which the Jewish nation was, on account of its peculiar relation to Jehovah, described as "a kingdom of priests," but, in the strict and proper sense of the word, because, the way into the holiest being now made open, all have immediate access to God through Christ, without the intervention of any human mediator. As every priest must "have somewhat to offer," Christians have their sacrifices, which however are but the spiritual sacrifices, either of praise and thanksgiving, "the fruit of the lips giving thanks to his name,"† or of themselves upon the altar of self-denial and love.‡ That it is these spiritual sacrifices, and not a material offering, that is meant in such passages of prophecy as that of Malachi, — "In every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering" (c. i. 11.), — Melancthon and Chemnitz have long ago satisfactorily shown.§

It was not from any want of familiarity with a priestly institute, and visible sacrifices, that this silence of the Apostles respecting any similar appointments in Christianity proceeded. It was under such a system that they themselves had lived, and all their natural associations would have led them to invest the office of the Christian minister with a sacerdotal character. In fact, regarding them merely as men, the circumstance that they abstained from so doing is unnatural, and not to be, on ordinary principles, explained; and perhaps nothing more clearly demonstrates the divine superintendence under which the New Testament was written than the fact that the authors of it, unlettered Jews, as most of the Apostles were, never once attribute priestly functions to the ministers of the New Covenant. Nothing could have preserved them, in this capital point, from the influence of early predispositions, but such a measure of spiritual guidance and illumination as has fallen to the lot of none of their successors.

There are extant three epistles of St. Paul, addressed to Chris-

* Pet. ii. 5.: v. 3. † Heb. xiii. 15.

‡ Rom. xii. 1. Compare Phil. iv. 18.

§ "Ipsa Prophetæ verba offerunt sententiam. Primum enim hoc proponunt, *magnum fore nomen Domini*. Id fit per prædicationem evangelii. Per hanc enim innotescit nomen Christi, et misericordia Patris in Christo promissa cognoscitur. Prædicatio evangelii parit fidem in his qui recipiunt evangelium. Hi invocant Deum, hi agunt Deo gratias, hi tolerant afflictiones in confessione, hi bene operantur propter gloriam Christi. Ita fit *magnum nomen Domini in gentibus*. *Incensum* igitur et *oblatio munda* significant non ceremoniam ex opere operato, sed omnia alia sacrificia, per quæ fit magnum nomen Domini, scilicet, fidem, invocationem, prædicationem evangelii, confessionem," &c. — Melancth. Apol. Conf. cap. 12. s. 32. Compare Chemnitz, Examen. Conc. Trid. loc. 6. art. 6. s. 8.

tian ministers, in which the duties of their office are laid down at length; but among those duties we search in vain for any of a properly sacerdotal character. Timothy is directed "to preach the Word;" "to give attendance to reading, exhortation, and doctrine;" to exercise discipline, to ordain elders; but nowhere is he instructed how to offer up the body and blood of Christ; nowhere is a commission given him to absolve the Christian people from their sins. The New Testament presents us with no Eucharistic ritual; no form for the consecration of the elements. Omissions of this kind in epistles especially designed to be a manual for the pastor are, on the supposition of the Christian ministry's being a proper priesthood, wholly unaccountable. For wherever there is a visible sacrifice and priesthood, it constitutes so important, so central, an element in the religious system of which it is a part, as to stand out in decided superiority to every other act of worship. So it was under the law, and so it is now in the Church of Rome: in that Church the eucharistic sacrifice of the mass constitutes the central feature of Christian worship, and, compared with it, every other act of religious service — prayer, preaching, and reading — occupies a subordinate position. If St. Paul had regarded Timothy and Titus as priests, it may reasonably be supposed that directions concerning the discharge of their sacerdotal functions of sacrifice and intercession would have occupied as large a space in his epistles to them as such subjects do in the pontifical of the Jewish priesthood, — the book of Leviticus. In any system of religion, there is either no visible sacrificial institute, or, if there is, it constitutes the essential part of the system, and absorbs into itself all the elements of religious worship.

It cannot be alleged, in explanation of the silence of the New Testament on the Christian sacrifice and priesthood, that, inasmuch, as Christianity was to spring from Judaism, and graft itself upon the Mosaic institutions, there was no need of the Apostles distinctly announcing the continuance, under the later dispensation, of the sacerdotal system of the former; since it would be taken for granted that, unless formally abrogated, it was to continue. So far from this being the case, the contrary is the truth, — viz. that the first Christians, whether of Jewish or of heathen origin, would, from the peculiar form of organization which Christian societies assumed, have been likely to take for granted that in Christianity there is no proper priesthood, and would have needed an express declaration on the part of their inspired guides to counteract this impression. In other words, the omission by

the Apostles of any such declaration was calculated, if there be indeed under the Gospel a visible sacrifice and priesthood, to give rise to, and perpetuate, in the minds of Christians, a serious misunderstanding. For, as we have seen, the visible constitution of Christian societies was derived, not from the Jewish temple, but from the synagogue: now the peculiarity of the worship of the synagogue, as distinguished from that of the temple, was, that there no sacrifice was offered, and consequently no priest was necessary to conduct the service. When, therefore, the first Christian society at Jerusalem was constituted after the synagogical pattern, the Jewish converts would at once conclude, unless the contrary were expressly stated, that in its worship no sacrificial element (save a purely spiritual one) was intended to be involved. No other conclusion could they arrive at as long as they saw before their eyes the divinely appointed sacrifices of the temple still subsisting, not having as yet been abrogated by the same divine lawgiver who appointed them. The idea that a new visible priesthood was to be instituted while the old one was in being is one which never could have entered the mind of the Jewish convert; hence, if such a priesthood was really to exist under the Gospel, it was absolutely necessary, in order to obviate serious error, that this should be distinctly announced by the Apostles; that their converts should be informed that, notwithstanding the synagogical form which Christian societies were to assume; notwithstanding the existence of the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices; similar institutions belong to the Gospel dispensation: that their "breaking of bread" was in reality an unbloody sacrifice, and their elders and deacons sacrificing priests. Without some express declaration of this kind, the first Christians would naturally, and inevitably, adopt the opinion that their ministers bore no other relation to the Christian people than that which the elders of the synagogue did to the rest of its members.

Indeed, the constitution of the first Christian societies furnishes a refutation of the sacerdotal theory so decisive and convincing that it is worth while to dwell a little longer upon it; especially as the subject has not received the attention which it deserves. The temple at Jerusalem bore the same relation to the Jewish synagogues scattered throughout the empire which the true Church, or mystical body of Christ, does to its visible manifestation,—the aggregate of local Christian societies in the world. However much synagogues might be multiplied, there was but one temple, one divinely appointed priesthood, one altar; and the synagogues,

otherwise distinct societies, were connected together by their common relation to the temple. The pious Jew, in what part soever of the world he might be, regarded the temple, with its priesthood, sacrifices, and ritual, as the centre of national unity: with it his most hallowed associations were connected, and thither, as we learn from the occurrences of the day of Pentecost, he was accustomed to repair from the remotest parts of the Roman empire, to celebrate with his brethren the solemn feasts enjoined by the law. Now the Jewish temple, as every reader of the New Testament knows, has in Christianity no material counterpart: it is the Church, the mystical body of Christ, composed of those who are in living union with Him, that is now the abode of God's covenanted presence. Each true Christian is the temple of the Holy Ghost,* or rather a living stone in the "spiritual house,"† resting upon "Jesus Christ the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."‡ Hence, there being in Christianity no material temple, the visible centre of unity to the local societies which constitute collectively the visible Church, there are no visible temple services, priesthood, or sacrifice; whatever there is in the Christian Church of a sacerdotal character is of the same nature with the Christian temple itself,—that is, it is spiritual and invisible. Christ, the only priest of the new temple, is in heaven, not upon earth; and the only sacrifices now offered by the Christian are the spiritual ones to which allusion has been already made, which are acceptable to God through the mediation of Christ. As the bond of union among the Jewish synagogues was the temple at Jerusalem, so the bond of union which now connects the various churches of Christ is their common relation to the one invisible temple, or "blessed company of all faithful people," the unity of which is not yet fully manifested, and to its one invisible Priest, who, at the right hand of God, ever liveth to make intercession for us.

It is easy to perceive how this bears upon the question of a human priesthood, and visible sacrifice, under the Gospel. The sacerdotal element of Judaism, its temple services, have passed into Christianity only in a figurative, or rather spiritual, and therefore invisible, form. The temple was the type of the one true Church, and the visible type has given place to the unseen reality: the synagogue, on the contrary, an institution which possessed

* "Know ye not that your body" (*i. e.* as the context shows, each of your bodies) "is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" 1 Cor. vi. 19.

† 1 Pet. ii. 4—9.

‡ Ephes. ii. 20—22.

nothing of a sacerdotal character, and with which no covenanted privileges were connected, reappeared under the Gospel, literally and visibly, in the form of local Christian societies. It seems to follow that the temple services of Christianity, whatever they may be, belong not to visible churches as such, but to the mystical body of Christ, and, like that body, are spiritual, or removed from the sphere of sense.

Quite in accordance with the conclusion thus, by a variety of arguments, forced upon us is the circumstance already noticed, — that the spiritual gifts of which the New Testament makes mention in connexion with the ministerial office have no bearing whatever upon sacerdotal functions: they all point to the homiletic services of the synagogue. These gifts are either a faculty of teaching, or an aptitude for governing, or conducting the affairs of a Christian society; which are exactly the duties which devolved upon the elders of the synagogue. The chief means of grace, the main function of Christian ministers, is, in St. Paul's view, "the ministry of the Word:" but, under a sacerdotal system, — as, for instance, that of the Church of Rome, — the teacher always, and necessarily, occupies, as compared with the priest and the sacrifice, a subordinate place. Under the law, it was no part of the priestly office to teach; no instructions upon that head are found in the portions of the Pentateuch which describe sacerdotal functions: it is well known, indeed, that the scribes, whose peculiar office it was to expound the law, belonged indiscriminately to all the tribes, though it is probable that the greater part of them were Levites. Sacrifice and intercession were the proper functions of the priest; teaching, admonishing, administering discipline, those of the Jewish elder: it is needless to ask, to which of these offices does that of the Christian minister, as described by St. Paul, bear the greatest resemblance.

The relation which the synagogue bore to the temple might lead to several reflections on the nature of the Christian church, which this is not the place to pursue. For example, we hence learn that under the Gospel no connexion exists between any form of ecclesiastical polity and the grace of Christ's Spirit. For ecclesiastical polity corresponds with the arrangements of the synagogue, to which, as being of human institution, no blessings were, by covenant, attached: the lustrations, and propitiatory sacrifices, belonging to the temple ritual. So, under the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins, and sanctifying grace, flow not from union with a Christian synagogue, — *i. e.* a visible church, — but from incorporation in the

spiritual temple, — the body of Christ, — to the members of which covenanted grace is conveyed through its glorified High Priest, Christ Jesus: a truth which, notwithstanding the ambiguity of his language, Augustin seems to have intended to express, when he says, "It is the rock, the dove, unity, that retains and remits sins. But this unity exists only in the good, whether they be advanced Christians, or only beginners in the spiritual life."*

The historical connexion between the church and the synagogue serves also to explain a circumstance which it is not uncommon to see urged in defence of the sacerdotal system, — viz. that the first Christians are found, apparently with the approbation, or permission, of the Apostles, frequenting the ordinances of the Jewish temple. Our information upon this point is too scanty to enable us to determine with certainty to what extent the Jewish converts conceived themselves bound by the legal enactments: admitting, however (and from various passages it seems the most probable supposition),† that they professed obedience to the whole law, it by no means follows that this is a warrant for the introduction of a human priesthood under the Gospel. "Had there been more than this," a recent writer urges, "in the Jewish ritual, how could the Apostles have continued to observe it? Had it interfered with the work of Christ, it would not have been enough to leave it to die away under the light of the Gospel. It would not have been sufficient for St. Paul to teach men not to trust; he must have forbidden any to practise it."‡ The reply at once suggests itself: — If the existence of the Jewish ritual was not incompatible with the principles of the Gospel, why was it suffered to die away at all? If a human priesthood and a visible sacrifice were to form constituent elements of the Christian, as they did of the Jewish, dispensation, why should not the ancient institutions have been continued? If Christian ministers are priests in the same sense in which the Jewish were, and the eucharist is as real a sacrifice as the paschal lamb, no necessity is apparent for the total abroga-

* De Bap. Cont. Don. L. iii. s. 23. If we may understand Augustin as affirming, not that "the dove," — *i. e.* the body of Christ — itself forgives sins, but that they who are in union with the dove have their sins forgiven, the sentiment is perfectly Scriptural.

† The Jewish believers are described by St. James (Acts, xxi. 20.) as "zealous of the law," from which it is reasonable to suppose that they not only practised circumcision, but assisted at the legal sacrifices. Certain it is that the vow which St. Paul took upon himself (Acts, xviii. 18.) required for its completion the offering of sacrifices in the temple; which accounts for the Apostle's haste to be at Jerusalem in time for the feast. Compare Acts, xxi. 26.

‡ Wilberforce, Incarnation, &c. p. 383.

tion of the ancient economy. But not to press this:—the question is, not what compliances with the precepts of the law the Apostles may, in the case of Jewish converts, have either permitted, or sanctioned, but whether they ever tolerated the introduction of Jewish practices or institutions into Christianity as essential parts of the new dispensation? For nothing is easier to account for than the circumstance of which we are now speaking. The fact has been already noticed, as highly significant of the nature of the Gospel, that the first converts, the Apostles themselves included, were far from supposing that in becoming Christians they had ceased to be Jews, or were free to neglect the ordinances of the law. The visible separation of the two economies was effected by a slow and gradual process, which was not complete until the destruction of Jerusalem; and it was altogether foreign from the spirit in which the Apostles regulated the affairs of the church rudely to disturb old associations where they did not infringe any of the essential principles of the Gospel. The great Apostle of the Gentiles himself, to whom of all the inspired college was vouchsafed the clearest insight into the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, professed it to be his rule of action, where it was a question of expediency merely, unto the Jews to become as a Jew; took upon himself vows; and even circumcised Timothy his beloved son in the faith. If it be asked when *did* the Apostles consider that the observance of the Jewish rites was incompatible with a saving interest in Christ? the answer is, whenever such observance was made essential to salvation,—that is, was formally incorporated in the Christian scheme. Thus the same Apostle who, as a matter of expediency, circumcised Timothy denounced the Galatian notions upon that point as destructive of the integrity of the Gospel.

It is in this light we are to regard the observance of the Jewish ritual by the first converts. Viewed as a matter of expediency, or as a compliance with the regulations of a divine law which had not yet been abrogated, there was nothing in their practice as regards this point incompatible with the religion of Christ. Christianity tolerates many things—slavery for example, —which it does not acknowledge to be part and parcel of itself; tolerates them as long as they do not claim a place in the sanctuary itself of the Gospel. The moment that a claim of this kind is advanced, the Gospel repels it, jealously guarding its own essential principles from foreign admixture. Everything turns upon the spirit, and intention, in which the Jewish converts frequented

the temple. As long as they did so merely because they believed themselves bound to obey the law, the Apostles might well permit a harmless error of this kind to be corrected by the course of Providential events: but the case, we may be sure, would have been very different had the first converts observed the Levitical ritual on the ground that it was essential to salvation, — had they avowedly regarded it, as the Jew had hitherto rightly regarded it, as the covenanted means of access to God. Had any such notion as this been connected with the temple sacrifices, the Apostle who so severely denounced the Galatian error would, beyond all doubt, have equally pronounced this analogous one to be inconsistent with right apprehensions of the Gospel. The circumstance, then, that the Apostles permitted their converts to observe the law proves nothing, as regards the question before us: what should have been proved, or at least made probable, is, that they would, in like manner, have made no opposition to the formal introduction of the Jewish sacerdotal system into the Gospel. The exclusive priesthood of Christ, and the perfection of His sacrifice, might well be compatible with the temporary observance of the Jewish ritual, which had waxed old, and was ready to vanish away; what remains to be proved is that they are also compatible with a *Christian* priesthood and sacrifice; a human priesthood, and a real sacrifice, regarded as part and parcel of Christianity itself. *

The abundance and cogency of the foregoing general presumptions against the proper priesthood of Christian ministers make it the less necessary to discuss at any length the passages of Scripture on which the sacerdotal theory is made to rest. To omit all

* While, for the reasons given in the text, we must protest against the transformation of the Christian ministry into a priesthood, and of Christian worship into a system of symbolism such as that of the Jewish ritual, we may regret that in some of the reformed churches the contrary extreme was fallen into, and not only was the application of art to Christian purposes pronounced unlawful, but the preaching of the Word assumed the same place which in the Romish Church the mass occupies, — viz. one of disproportionate importance. Hence the custom of celebrating the Eucharist only twice or thrice in the year. A system of symbolism — such as portioning out the parts of a cathedrel to represent particular facts in the economy of grace, or setting apart one part of it as more holy than another — can never be rendered compatible with the principles of the Gospel, for it implies that He in whom grace and truth reside is not yet manifested: the Jewish ritual was necessarily a symbolical one because Christ was not yet come. Now that He has come, shadow and symbol have disappeared. This, however, is a very different thing from the application of art to the purposes of Christian worship, which is not only allowable, but laudable. So as regards the Eucharist; the reaction from Romanism has led to an undue depreciation of this holy ordinance. How much is it to be wished that the celebration of it in our own church, instead of being thrust into a corner at the end of a liturgy, in itself too lengthened, and after the great mass of the congregation has retired, should form a service by itself, and take place, if possible weekly, before the assembled people.

notice of them, however, would be to leave the present inquiry incomplete, and might be considered as a tacit acknowledgement that they do not, on protestant principles, admit of a satisfactory interpretation.

To the question, When were the Apostles, the first link in the chain of ministerial succession, consecrated priests; the Romish formularies, by way of reply, remind us that at the last supper Christ delivered to them the bread and wine, saying "Do this in remembrance of me;"* by which act, and words, of our Lord, it is said, they became invested with a sacerdotal character, which has descended to their successors. Where this conclusion is not at once drawn, our attention is nevertheless directed to the fact that Christ, in instituting this holy ordinance, committed the celebration of it, not to the whole body of believers but, to the Apostles only. The same restriction, it is observed, applies to the baptismal commission, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. The inferences are, first, that, while they lived, none but the Apostles, or they to whom the Apostles gave authority, had a right to administer the sacraments; secondly, that none but the successors of the Apostles, or those commissioned by them, possess a similar right now; and, thirdly, that where this rule is violated, the sin of Korah is committed, and the sacraments fail to convey covenanted grace to the receivers. In confirmation of the theory we are referred to 1 Cor. iv. 1., where Christian ministers are described as "stewards of the mysteries of God," dispensers, as the passage is interpreted, of the Sacraments.

For the power of absolution, the remaining sacerdotal function, the well-known passages are cited in which our Lord delivered the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," with power to bind and loose, first to Peter singly, and then to all the Apostles; and especially that in which He is recorded, after His resurrection, to have imparted the Holy Ghost to the eleven, with power to remit and retain sins. (Matt. xvi. 19. and xviii. 18.; John, xx. 21—23.)

Whether these passages are sufficient to sustain the vast superstructure which is raised upon them may be left to the decision

*It is painful to see a writer like Bishop Taylor using this argument to establish a quasi human priesthood under the Gospel. "Hoc facite, — this do in remembrance of me. This cannot but relate to 'accepit, gratias egit, fregit, distribuit; hoc facite.' Here was no manducation expressed, and therefore 'hoc facite' concerns the Apostles in the capacity of ministers; not as receivers, but as consecrators and givers" &c. — Divine Institution of the Office Ministerial, s. 5, 4. It is hard to say which has been productive of greater damage to the cause of truth, the opposition of dissent to the Church of England, or the reaction on the part of the church produced by that opposition.

of the intelligent reader of Scripture: little more will here be offered than a few remarks on the position of the Apostles both before and after Christ's resurrection, a point which is of great importance in deciding upon the interpretation to be put on His addresses to them.

The Apostles, then, appear, in our Lord's discourses with them, in a threefold point of view: first, as Apostles, in the strict sense of the word,— that is, as witnesses of Christ's resurrection and inspired founders of the Church; — secondly, as representatives of the Christian ministry in general; and, thirdly, as representatives of the Church at large. Unless we carefully distinguish between the different characters under which the Apostles are thus addressed, we shall be liable to put a wrong construction upon our Lord's expressions in reference to them.

Thus, to select one instance out of many, it is obvious that in many parts of the concluding discourse of our Lord, recorded by St. John, the Apostles are addressed, neither specially as Apostles, nor even as Christian ministers, but, simply as believers in Christ, as representatives of the Church in general. For the promise of access to the Father through the Son (John, xiv. 13.); of the Comforter to abide with them forever (v. 16.); of the indwelling of Christ in their hearts (v. 23.): the privilege of being branches in the true vine (c. xv. 1.); of being chosen by Christ (v. 16.); of having a place prepared for them in the mansions of glory (c. xiv. 1.): belong evidently, not to the Apostles, or their successors in the ministry, alone, but to the whole Church. That our Lord in these discourses regarded the Apostles as representatives of the body of true believers in every age is clear from the words of the concluding prayer: — "neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." (c. xvii. 20.)

It is, however, equally clear that certain parts of this same address relate to the eleven in their character of Apostles, as distinguished from all other Christians. Of this kind are the promises of plenary inspiration (chaps. xiv. 26., xvi. 13), and the allusions to the office which they were to discharge as witnesses of Christ's resurrection (chaps. xv. 27., xvi. 16.).

On the other hand, in the instructions given by our Lord to the Apostles when sending them forth on their temporary mission among the cities of Israel, the twelve seem to be addressed simply as ministers of Christ; which is still more clearly the case in Luke, xii. 31 — 48., where of a general precept concerning Chris-

tian watchfulness a special application is made to the Apostles as rulers and stewards of the household. The admonition contained in these verses is clearly applicable, not to the Apostles only, but, to the ministers of Christ in every age.

Once more in Matt. xix. 27—30., the twelve are addressed partly as representatives of the true Church, and partly as Apostles in the proper sense of the word. For in reply to Peter's statement that he and his colleagues had left all to follow him, our Lord declares, first, that all who imitated their example should receive an ample reward, and then, that the Apostles in particular should "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

From these examples, which might be multiplied, it will be evident that to draw conclusions from any particular promise given to the Apostles, or any transactions in which they may have been concerned, without carefully examining in what capacity they are addressed, is the ready way to involve the whole subject in confusion. As a matter of biblical exposition, nothing can be more crude than to argue that because on a given occasion Christ conferred certain powers and privileges upon the Apostles, these powers and privileges exist now in the Church. Each passage of this kind must be submitted to a careful scrutiny; times and circumstances must be taken into account; and, in short, that humble diligence in searching the Scriptures must be exercised which, conjoined with a single eye to truth, is indispensable to our being led into truth.

Applying this principle of interpretation to the passages just mentioned, let us examine what can be really inferred from each. On the evening preceding His crucifixion, our Lord, in company with the Apostles, celebrated the feast of the passover, and took occasion to consecrate a portion of its ritual to be in all ages a solemn memorial of His body given, and His blood shed, for the sins of the world. Delivering to them the bread, He said, "Take, eat, this is my body: this do" (viz. eat, not sacrifice) "in remembrance of me." In like manner he gave them the cup, saying, "Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for you, and for many for the remission of sins." The notion that by these words of Christ the Apostles were consecrated priests, it is not worth while to spend time in refuting: the only question that can arise is, in what capacity are they to be considered as addressed? Nothing, however, can be clearer than that here the Apostles are regarded, neither as Apostles

properly so called, but as Christian ministers in general, but, as representatives of the true Church in every age. Our Lord was not giving directions how, or by whom, an ordinance, previously instituted, was to be administered, but for the first time instituting the ordinance itself, which is one that belongs indiscriminately to all Christians; and he instituted it in the persons of the Apostles, not as inspired messengers of the Spirit, or as ministers of Christ, but simply as believers. If the twelve are not in this passage to be thus regarded, the conclusion that follows is, not merely that to them alone (their successors in the ministry included) the *administration* of the sacred rite was committed, but that they alone were entitled to partake of it. To the proper mode of administering the ordinance the words of institution contain not the slightest reference; the reception of it ("Take, eat; drink ye all of this") is what is enjoined upon the Apostles: and nothing can be more arbitrary, if stress is to be laid upon the fact that the Apostles only were present when it was instituted, than to stop short at the inference that upon them alone the power of administration was conferred, when, by reasoning precisely similar, it might be made further to appear that to them alone the privilege of reception was confined. We cannot in this way manage our premises, making them prove as much as we wish, and no more.

With the baptismal commission the case is somewhat different. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." These last words, indeed, make it plain that the charge is not given to the eleven as the inspired founders of the Church, for the apostolate, in the proper sense of the word, was not to continue unto the end of the world. To the remarks already made upon this point little need here be added. A perpetual infallible tribunal—such as that which the Apostles while they were upon earth constituted—would be inconsistent with a spiritual dispensation like that of the Gospel, both as localizing what is meant to be universal, and as unalterably fixing details of practice which had better be left free. As there is under the Gospel no local temple, or place with which the special presence of God is connected, so, and for the same reason, the Church possesses no standing living oracle, whether an individual, or a body of men, empowered to deliver infallible decisions upon each debated point of doctrine or practice, as it

may arise. In place of such a tribunal, the operation of which would in a short time transform the Gospel into a system like that of Moses, there has been vouchsafed to the Church an inspired record, which, like its divine Author, recognizes no local limits, and which professes to do no more for our guidance than enunciate general principles suited to every clime and age. In short, the same reasons which made it expedient that Christ should leave the world, committing the administration of His Church to the Spirit, apply with equal force against the continuance of a living apostolate, the word being understood in its full and proper meaning.

This interpretation of the passage being set aside as untenable, we may either, with Chrysostom,* regard the promise of Christ as given to the Church at large, then represented in the Apostles, or we may suppose that, while taken in its full extent, it belongs to the whole Church, it yet has a particular reference to the eleven, not, however, as Apostles, but as representatives of the Christian ministry in general, which, indeed, seems to be the true application of the passage. Thus understood, it will signify that, while Christ is present with all His people (John, xiv. 23.), He is so in a more especial manner with His ministers, to whom, as long as their teaching coincides with that of the Apostles, His divine cooperation is assured to the end of time. But where is there in the passage the slightest hint of the validity of baptism being dependent upon the ecclesiastical position of the persons who are to administer it? Where is the divine law confining the admistration of the ordinance to the Apostles, and those upon whom the Apostles should devolve a portion of their commission? That our Lord here appears to have contemplated, not this or that order of Christian ministers, but, His ministers in general, as the proper persons, first to instruct candidates for baptism, and then to administer the ordinance, may be admitted: but these are functions which common sense, independently of any divine direction, would assign to the pastors of each Church.

In short, no passage can be produced from the New Testament in which the administration of the Sacraments is, by a divine law, restricted to the Apostles or their delegates, or the grace of these ordinances made dependent upon the persons of the administrators. Nowhere are the Apostles found claiming the exclusive right to baptize, or to consecrate the Eucharist. They that gladly received Peter's word were baptized;† by whom we are not informed. Philip, the deacon, baptized the eunuch; that he received from the

* See above, p. 200.

† Acts, ii. 41.

Apostles a formal commission to do so is not told us.* Ananias, in all probability a layman, appears to have baptized St. Paul. Peter, beholding the evidences of a living faith in Cornelius and his friends, "commanded them to be baptized;" whether by himself or others, is left undetermined.† St. Paul declares that Christ sent him, not to baptize, but, to preach the Gospel; a declaration which, to say the least, negatives the supposition of its being the peculiar function of the Apostles to administer this sacrament. With respect to the Eucharist, the notices of Scripture are still more scanty and defective; or, rather, there is not a particle of evidence to prove that the administration of it was restricted to the Apostles, or those whom they appointed to minister in the Church. The first believers brake "bread from house to house," "came together on the first day of the week to break bread;"‡ but who it was that consecrated the elements; what the form of consecration was, or whether there was any such form; by whom the consecrated bread and wine were delivered to the people; upon these, and the like points, which, according to the Church theory, ought to have been defined with the utmost exactness, Scripture observes a profound silence. The only thing essential to the validity of the sacrament appears to have been the presence of Christ in the midst of His people: the true consecrating principle in the holy ordinance was the living faith of those who partook of it. To "make the Sacraments"§ was, as far as we can see, the prerogative, not of a sacerdotal order upon earth, but of Him from whom alone all ordinances derive their virtue. St. Paul, in one passage,‖ treats at some length of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, its import, and the proper mode of celebrating it: upon the question, however, what is necessary to make the ordinance valid? he also is silent. It appears to have been then the custom to ask a blessing upon the elements; but nothing can be more indeterminate than the manner in which the Apostle alludes to this custom: "the cup of blessing which we bless; the bread which we break:"¶ from whose lips the blessing proceeded is left to us to conjecture. If no lengthened observations are needed upon the passage in which St. Paul describes himself and his fellow Apostles as "stewards of the mysteries of God," it is because every intelligent reader of Scripture is aware, that by the word "mys-

* Acts, viii. 38. † Acts, ix. 18.
‡ Acts, ii. 46.; xx. 7.
§ Conficere sacramentum: the usual expression employed by Romish writers.
‖ 1 Cor. xi. 17—34. ¶ 1 Cor. x. 16.

tery," as used by St. Paul, is invariably meant a doctrine, hitherto hidden, but now revealed: never an ordinance:* so that the passage merely affirms of Christian ministers, that they are stewards, or dispensers, of the truths of the Gospel, as indeed the requirement that they be "faithful" is of itself sufficient to prove.

Before quitting this point, it may be worth our while to mark the different fate which, in the lapse of time, the two sacraments experienced. By the Donatist controversy the principle was established, that baptism, even when administered by those not in communion with the Church, if only the word and the element had been present, was so far valid as that it was not to be repeated in the case of those who, having been thus baptized in schism, became reconciled to the Church. It was argued by Augustin, most conclusively, that the sacrament is Christ's, not his who administers it; and derives its virtue from the sacred name in which it is administered. This was, in effect, disconnecting the validity of the ordinance from the person of the administrator; for though it was still maintained that the recipient, as long as he continued in a state of schism, derived no *saving* benefit from his baptism, still the ordinance itself was pronounced valid, and, as such, was not to be repeated. In accordance with this principle, the Romish Church, as is well known, permits, in cases of necessity, laymen, and even women, to baptize; and even should the sacrament have been administered by a Jew or a pagan, acknowledges its validity, provided matter, form, and due intention, were present.† The Eucharist, on the contrary, has always been most jealously guarded from the profanation of lay hands; the consecration of it by an unordained person being deemed absolutely null and void. Yet, if there is any difference in Scripture, as regards this point, between the two sacraments, baptism is the one which has more the appearance of being restricted; Matt. xxviii. 19. affording some ground for the assertion that the Apostles only, as ministers of Christ, received authority to baptize, while for such a limitation in reference to the other sacrament no scriptural evidence at all can be produced. But it is a characteristic of the Church system

* The passage, "this is a great mystery" (Ephes. v. 32.), translated by the vulgate sacramentum hoc magnum est, is no exception to the rule: for the "mystery" is, not the ordinance itself of marriage, but St. Paul's application of Gen. ii. 24., — "for this cause shall a man leave his father" &c., — to illustrate the union of Christ and His Church: an application of the passage hitherto unthought of.

† Bellarm. De Bap. L. i. c. 7.

to be most peremptory and exclusive in its decisions where Scripture supplies the slenderest foundation for them.

It must be again and again repeated that, in contending against the notion that the Sacraments owe their validity to their being administered by a priestly caste, in whose hands alone they convey covenanted grace, the Protestant by no means infringes the great principle, that "all things be done decently and in order." Order in Christian assemblies *is* a divine law; and the only one that is laid down for the guidance of Christians. In obedience to it, it is obvious that some persons must be set apart to administer the Sacraments; and who so fit for this office as they upon whom the duty devolves of preparing candidates for those ordinances, and who are to act as the organs of the Church in the exercise of discipline? Reason dictates that the ministers of the Word should also be the ministers of the Sacraments: so it was probably from the first; so certainly it is now in most Christian assemblies. As a question of order, this rule stands on its own sufficient ground, and must not be needlessly infringed. But to make it rest on grounds of order does not satisfy the advocates of the Church system: it must be transformed into a divine law, as peremptory as that which, under the old dispensation, made the offering of sacrifice the exclusive function of the priesthood. "There is no reason to establish the right of men, without succession from the Apostles, to administer the Holy Eucharist, which will not justify the taking away of the cup:"* thus it is that an unscriptural theory leads even pious men to hazard statements which will not bear a moment's investigation; statements which are rendered needless when the sacerdotal system which they are intended to sustain itself dissolves before the full beams of Gospel truth.†

* Manning, Unity, &c. p. 325.

† It was only by degrees that the dogma of the validity of the Sacraments being dependent upon the person of the administrator established itself in the Church; the free evangelical view continued for a long time to be held and taught by writers of great note. In the following passage of Tertullian (De Baptismo, c. 17.) it is very strongly expressed: —"Dandi quidem habet jus summus sacerdos, qui est episcopus, dehine presbyteri et diaconi, non tamen sine episcopi auctoritate, propter ecclesiæ honorem, quo salvo, salva pax est. Alioquin etiam laicis jus est; quod enim ex æquo accipitur, ex æquo dari potest: nisi episcopi jam, aut presbyteri, aut diaconi vocantur, discentes. Domini sermo non debet abscondi ab ullo. Proinde et baptismus, æque Dei census, ab omnibus exerceri potest; sed quanto magis laicis disciplina verecundiæ et modestiæ incumbit?" Very different is the language of the Apostolical Constitutions: —*Ὡς οὖν οὐκ ἦν ἐξὸν ἀλλογενῆ, μὴ ὄντα Λευίτην, προσενέγκαι τι, ἢ προσελθεῖν εἰς τὸ θυσιαστήριον ἄνευ τοῦ ἱερέως, οὕτω καὶ ὑμεῖς ἄνευ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου μηδὲν ποιεῖτε . . . . . ὡς γὰρ ὁ Σαοὺλ, ἄνευ τοῦ Σαμουὴλ, προσενέγκας, ἤκουσεν, ὅτι μεματαίωταί σοι· οὕτω καὶ πᾶς λαϊκὸς ἄνευ τοῦ ἱερέως ἐπιτελῶν τι, μάταια πονεῖ.*—Lib. ii. c. 27.

The same discriminating test will be of service in enabling us to ascertain the true meaning of the passages from which the existence of a power in Christian ministers to remit or retain sins has been inferred. These are, as is well known, three in number: — The promise to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven:" the same repeated to all the Apostles, "whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven:" and the charge given by Christ, after his resurrection, to the assembled eleven, "He breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." * The conclusion founded upon them is, that there is vested in Christian ministers, as successors of the Apostles, a power, not merely of pronouncing that sin is, in the case of the penitent believer, forgiven, but, of potentially conveying, or withholding, forgiveness; sacerdotal absolution being the appointed means through which remission of sins committed after baptism is conferred, and the priest, ministerially it is true, but still in a real sense, holding the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which he opens or shuts as to him may seem good.

It is no conclusive argument against this doctrine, which delivers the lay members of Christ's body completely into the power of the priesthood, that it places Christians under a yoke incomparably more oppressive than that which was laid upon the stiff-necked people of the old covenant, inasmuch as the Jewish priest, though the appointed channel of communication between God and man, had no authority either to remit or retain sins; if the penitential institute, of which sacerdotal absolution is part, be really an appointment of Christ, we must bow in submission to the divine enactment. Only we may fairly require that the Scriptural proof of such a power having been committed to the clergy shall be clear and unquestionable.

Now the first thing that strikes us, on a survey of the passages in question, is, that, whatever may be gathered from them respecting the prerogatives of the *Apostles*, they contain no hint whatever of the continued existence of Apostolic powers in the Church. That the existing Christian ministry, or any particular order of it,

* Matt. xvi. 19. Ibid. xviii. 18. John, xx. 21–23.

:nherits the authority given to the Apostles to bind and loose, to remit or retain sins;—this, the important link in the chain of argument, can never be supplied from these passages taken by themselves. For aught that appears in the words of Christ, the power which He conveyed to the Apostolic body may have been a personal privilege, which was to cease with its first possessors. The contrast in this respect between it and the baptismal commission is very remarkable: while the power of binding and loosing, remitting and retaining sins is unaccompanied by any declaration indicating that it was to continue in the Church, the ordinary duties of the Christian ministry, to teach and to baptize, though in the first instance charged upon the Apostles alone, are shown to be of perpetual use by the concluding promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." So strongly, indeed, has this omission in the first-mentioned passages been felt that, as a learned writer has recently observed, * the attempt is not unfrequently made to supply it by tacking on to the power of binding and loosing, &c., the promise in Matt. xxviii. of Christ's perpetual presence, though no warrant whatever exists for so doing, the two commissions evidently having nothing in common, either as regards time or matter.

And indeed, when we proceed to examine the literal purport of the passages, it becomes evident that the powers which Christ here actually conferred upon the Apostles never existed, in their fulness and integrity, in any save the inspired founders of the Church. For the purposes of interpretation, the two first passages may be considered as one, the power of binding and loosing, which in the former of them is conferred upon Peter alone, being, in the latter, bestowed equally upon all the Apostles. True it is that the address of Christ to Peter (Matt. xvi. 19.) is, in its form, strictly personal, and contains predictive matter which had its accomplishment in the ministry of that Apostle only. Thus, for example, Peter may, in an especial sense, be said to have held the keys of the kingdom of heaven, inasmuch as he it was who actually opened the door of salvation to all believers, Gentiles as well as Jews. He was the first to announce, on the day of Pentecost, to his Jewish brethren, that to them first the promise of forgiveness of sin through the same Jesus whom they had crucified, appertained; and he also was the first to admit in the person of Cornelius believing Gentiles into the fold of Christ. But in the

* Benson, Discourses on the Powers of the Clergy, p. 32.

rest of the address, we cannot but suppose that he is regarded as the representative of the Apostolic college, whose faith expressed itself in his memorable confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" the ready zeal of Peter leading him on this occasion, as on many others, to anticipate his brethren in the expression of sentiments which they all equally felt. For it is difficult to draw an essential line of distinction between the authority given to Peter to bind and loose, and the same authority conferred subsequently by Christ upon all the Apostles. A special application indeed of this general power appears to be contemplated in Matt. xviii. 18.— viz. to enforce the decisions of the congregation, or local church, in cases of civil injury committed by one Christian against another; but the power itself, as we may gather from the similarity of the expression, was in both cases essentially the same.

What, then, are we to understand by this privilege? Plainly a plenary authority to make such regulations, either by abrogating ancient rules or imposing new ones, as should from time to time seem necessary for the well being of Christ's church. The terms "binding" and "loosing" are known to have been in common use among the Jews, in the signification of enacting, or abrogating, regulations of discipline; and in this sense they are here used by our Lord. Thus Peter "bound," or enacted a binding regulation, when he commanded Cornelius, the first believing Gentile, to be baptized, thus extending the initiatory ordinance of the Gospel to a case which had not previously arisen; and he "loosed," or did away with the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, when he admitted the same Cornelius to equal privileges with the Jewish converts, without imposing upon him the rite of circumcision. The same Apostle, not however singly, but in conjunction with James and the rest of the Apostles then present at Jerusalem, "loosed," or released, the Gentile converts from the yoke of the Mosaic law: indeed the proceedings of the Apostolic council referred to are the best, and a sufficient, commentary upon our Lord's words. In like manner, whatever appointments of polity, or church discipline, or Christian worship, the Apostles may have made, they made in virtue of the general authority conferred upon them by Christ to bind and to loose, that is, to legislate for Christian societies.

It follows, then, in the first place, that the Apostolic privilege of which we are speaking had no reference whatever to sacerdotal absolution, or indeed in any way to the forgiveness of sins. With the subject of absolution these passages have no imaginable con-

nexion: they refer to a power altogether different. As Lightfoot remarks, it is not *persons*, but *things*, which the Apostles were empowered to bind and loose; the form of the expression being in both passages so framed as to apply to the latter only. "Binding and loosing, in our Saviour's sense, and in the Jews' sense, from whose use he taketh the phrase, is of things and not of persons; for Christ saith to Peter, ὃ ἐὰν δήσῃς, and ὃ ἐὰν λύσῃς; ὅ and not ὅν; 'whatsoever' thou bindest, and not 'whomsoever;' and to the other Apostles ὅσα ἐὰν δήσητε, Matt. xviii. 18.; ὅσα not ὅσους 'whatsoever things,' and not 'whatsoever persons.'"*

And, secondly, in whatever measure we may suppose this Apostolic authority to have been inherited by the Church, it is obvious that, in its proper integrity, it was a peculiar privilege of the Apostles. To pronounce authoritative decisions on points of Christian practice, decisions which were to be ratified in heaven, has never been the prerogative of any uninspired man or set of men: for the promise manifestly implies a supernatural preservation from error. When our Lord declared that whatever his Apostles should bind and loose upon earth should be bound and loosed in heaven, He must be supposed to have contemplated them as those to whom the additional promise was given, that the Spirit should lead them into all truth.

With these abatements, the power of binding and loosing may be regarded as still existing in the Church. That portion of the original authority which we may believe to have descended to the Church, is the right of every Christian society to make such by-laws and regulations as from time to time shall seem expedient, provided always that such regulations do not contravene the spirit of the apostolic institutions recorded in Scripture; and especially the right of enforcing its decrees by the penalty of excommunication. For if in Matt. xvi. 19. Peter is addressed as the representative of the apostolic college, in Matt. xviii. 18. the Apostles are still more manifestly addressed as the representatives of the Church of every age. "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven;"—nothing can be clearer than that the company of the Apostles is here regarded as the type, not of the Christian ministry in par-

* Lightfoot, Commentary on Acts. Compare his Heb. Exercit. on Matt. xvi. 19.

ticular, but of local Christian societies; upon which, in the persons of the Apostles, was thus conferred by Christ the power of exercising discipline, with the assurance that, when exercised agreeably to Apostolic precedent, it should receive the divine sanction. The case supposed in Matt. xviii. 18. is, not that of a sin against God, but of a civil injury inflicted by one Christian upon another; and a full illustration of the passage is furnished by St. Paul's reproof of the Corinthian converts for suing each other in the heathen courts of law, instead of settling their differences before a tribunal of their own; which tribunal the Apostle nowhere directs to be composed of clerical persons only. (1 Cor. vi. 5.) Indeed, where, as in Christian countries, the civil magistracy is professedly Christian, the Apostle's prohibition must be considered as revoked.

Of a very different nature is the authority to remit and retain sins bestowed upon the Apostles by Christ after His resurrection. Our Lord's words are too express and plain, to permit us to interpret them, as has been done, to signify merely a commission to preach the Gospel, or to admit men by baptism into the visible church. Whatever secondary sense the passage may bear, the power originally given to the Apostles by Christ, when "He breathed upon them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost," cannot be supposed to be any other than that of authoritatively pronouncing within the pale of the Christian community the sins of certain persons to be remitted, and of certain others to be retained, or not forgiven. This is placed beyond doubt both by the comparison which Christ institutes between his own mission by the Father, and the mission of the Apostles by himself; and by his bestowing upon them, at the same time, that gift of the Spirit which alone could enable them to discharge an office so unfit to be intrusted to men unassisted by supernatural grace. Our Lord's address, then, may be thus paraphrased: — "As the Father hath sent me with a delegated authority to pronounce upon earth sins forgiven" (a power which Christ did actually claim and exercise, when He said to the sick of the palsy, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee,") "so send I you, with a similarly delegated power, and that you may be qualified for the exercise of it, I bestow upon you a special gift of the Holy Ghost, whereby you shall be enabled to discern the presence, or the absence, of those inward dispositions which are the condition of God's vouchsafing or withholding the forgiveness of sin. Your sentence thus pronounced upon earth shall receive the divine sanction, and be ratified in heaven."

But if the passage is to be thus understood (and nothing less

will satisfy its literal meaning), it is evident that, in its original acceptation, it applies only to the case of the inspired ambassadors of Christ. For to none but them has there ever been committed such a gift of the Spirit as enables its possessor so to discern the state of men's hearts, as to be warranted in pronouncing them either still in a state of condemnation, or pardoned. It is an act of culpable inadvertence to claim, on the strength of the passage before us, this power for the existing clergy, as successors of the Apostles, without inquiring whether the indispensable qualification for its safe exercise — viz. the gift of the Spirit which the Apostles possessed, has descended to the existing church, or any part of it. And who shall arrogate to himself such a gift of spiritual discernment? Manifestly the spiritual gift has been withdrawn, for overt transgressions are all that can now be made the subject of church censures. When Apostles are again vouchsafed, confirming their claim of inspiration by miracles, and having their sentences of condemnation, or absolution, visibly ratified by heaven, then, but not until then, we may affirm that there exists in the Church a power, similar to that exercised by the Apostolic college, of remitting or retaining sins.

It may be asked, do proofs exist of the Apostles having exercised the power conferred upon them otherwise than as we may suppose it capable of being exercised now? The reply is, that, in point of fact, they are found remitting and retaining sins, in the same sense in which Christ Himself did while upon earth, the Lord fulfilling at the same time His promise of ratifying their sentences. Very soon after the day of Pentecost, St. Peter gave proof of his possessing this peculiar prerogative. Ananias, having sold his land, kept back part of the price, and laid the remainder at the Apostles' feet. The deception practised was unknown to the disciples, but Peter, under the promised influence of the Spirit, which enabled him to read the heart, detected and exposed it. He expostulated with Ananias on his attempted fraud, pronounced him guilty of lying against the Holy Ghost; — in other words "retained" his sin, — and immediately the divine ratification of the Apostle's judgment followed; — "Ananias, hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the Ghost." His wife Sapphira, the accomplice of his guilt, coming in soon afterwards, the same exhibition of apostolic power took place.* In the case of Simon, the same Apostle employed language which no one, who did not possess a supernatural gift of

* Acts, v. 3–10.

spiritual discernment, could have ventured to employ: — Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if, perhaps, the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."* The history of St. Paul furnishes another example, with, however, a different result. He and Barnabas, having come to Cyprus to preach the Word of God, found their operations impeded by the active opposition of Elymas the sorcerer. "Then Saul (who is also called Paul), being filled with the Holy Ghost" (and, consequently, enabled to discern this man's inward state), exercised his power of remitting and retaining sins. He denounced Elymas as a child of the devil, and an enemy of all righteousness, that is, retained his sins; and the Lord, by inflicting upon the sorcerer the punishment of blindness for a season, bore testimony to the word of His chosen messenger.† In the epistles of this Apostle, frequent allusions to the exercise of the same power are found. Thus in the case of the incestuous Corinthian, the Apostle had resolved, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ" (committed to himself in common with the other Apostles), "to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh:"‡ but, on hearing of the offender's repentance, he "remitted" his sin;" "to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it, in the person of Christ;"§ *i. e.* as personating, or representing Christ, not in His offices of prophet, priest, and king, but in that authority which the Son of Man exercised on earth, — the authority to forgive sins. In like manner, we read of his delivering Hymenæus and Alexander unto Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme. For that these passages refer to simple excommunication both the peculiar form of the expression, and the evident allusion to some extraordinary bodily visitation, as following upon the apostolic condemnation, render altogether improbable.

Why such a power should have been lodged in the Apostles' hands, and why it should expire with them, seems not difficult of explanation. The first founders of the Church had difficulties to contend with, which none of their successors have had. The leaven of Christianity was but just being introduced into the corrupted

* Acts, viii. 21—23.
† Acts, xiii. 6—11.
‡ 1 Cor. v. 3—5.
§ 2 Cor. ii. 10.

mass of the heathen world, and the general diffusion of Christian sentiments, which renders it comparatively easy for the modern teachers of religion to inculcate the precepts of the Gospel, being wholly wanting, the Apostles had nothing, in their contests with anti-christian error, to fall back upon but their personal prerogatives. In point of fact, the first churches, as we gather from St. Paul's epistles, frequently presented a strange admixture of foreign elements, partly of Jewish, and partly of heathen, origin, and the wildest and most licentious doctrines found a place side by side with the pure teaching of the Apostles. To meet such a state of things, which might have issued in the total subversion of the Christian faith; to overawe the turbulent, and control the vagaries of an unbridled imagination, nourished amidst the abominations of heathenism; it was necessary that in the hands of the first heralds of the Gospel, divinely qualified as they were to exercise without abusing it, an extraordinary power should be vested, which none could gainsay, or resist. While the mass was in the first stage of effervescence an authority to control its movements was needful and salutary. And such an authority was conferred by Christ upon the Apostles. They possessed the power, not only of working miracles in general to convince the unbeliever, but of exposing, and punishing with temporal inflictions, Christ bearing testimony to their word, those hidden depravities of the heart within the pale of the Church which, whether evincing themselves in moral turpitude or heretical blasphemy, had already been condemned by God. The spirit of the old dispensation was for a time continued under the new; until such time, namely, as Christianity, in its leading principles, doctrinal and practical, should have taken a stronger hold of men's minds. But as soon as things had settled into this state, it was natural that the extraordinary power, suitable to the previous period of transition, should be withdrawn, and the expulsion of sin and error from the Christian community be left to the exercise of an uninspired discipline, and the gradual approximation of Christians to the standard of practice set before them in the inspired Word.

Do the words of Christ, then, admit of no application whatever to the uninspired successors of the Apostles in the Christian ministry? Far from it. Here, also, as in the former case, the Church inherits apostolic powers; but she inherits them subject to the limitations which the difference between inspired and uninspired men renders necessary. To pronounce absolutely the sins of any person remitted or retained is a profane parody upon the

original apostolic power; for it implies a power which belongs to God only, and to those upon whom God may be pleased by special gift to bestow it,—that of seeing into the heart of man: but to declare conditionally—that is, on the presumption of repentance and faith—the forgiveness of sins to the penitent, is still the office of the Church, and especially of her ministers, for this, in fact, is nothing more than the preaching of the Gospel. In this improper and secondary sense, and in no other, is the apostolic privilege shared in by ordinary Christian ministers. By denouncing God's judgments against the impenitent they retain sins; by assuring the penitent of forgiveness, they remit sins; by inviting all men to believe on Christ that they may be saved they open the kingdom of heaven:—thus far, and no further, are they inheritors of the authority once given to the Apostles. In this sense, in fact, it is that the passage in St. John's Gospel is, by most Protestant writers of note, applied to post-apostolic times; of whose general method of interpretation the words of Bishop Jewell, cited in the note, will serve as a specimen.* It is worthy of remark, indeed, that for instances of the exercise of such a power by others besides the Apostles we search the inspired records in vain. To remit or retain sins, as St. Paul himself did, forms no part of his commission to Timothy and Titus; nor does he ever recognise such a power in the presbyters, or deacons, mentioned in his other epistles. The Apostle could send forth Timothy to preside, for the time being, over the Church of Ephesus; to reprove, rebuke, and exhort; to convince gainsayers, and to edify the flock; but he could not, and did not, send him as the Father had sent Christ, and Christ had sent the Apostles, nor could he bestow upon him the gift of the Holy Ghost for the remission and retention of sins. And certainly powers which Timothy and Titus, and their fellow workers of the apostolic age, did not possess, the present bishops and presbyters of the Church cannot be supposed to inherit.

Protestantism rejects the dogma of a human priesthood on the

* "Ministris a Christo datum esse dicimus ligandi, solvendi, aperiendi, claudendi potestatem. Ac solvendi quidem munus in eo situm esse, ut minister, vel dejectis animis et vere resipiscentibus per Evangelii prædicationem, merita Christi, absolutionemque offerat, et certam peccatorum condonationem, ac spem salutis æternæ denunciet: aut eos qui gravi scandalo, et notabili aliquo delicto, fratrum animos offenderint, et sese a communi societate, Ecclesiæ, et a Christi corpore quodammodo abalienarint, resipiscentes reconciliet, et in fidelium cœtum atque unitatem recolligat et restituat. Ligandi vero illum claudendique potestatem exercere dicimus, quoties vel incredulis et contumacibus regni cœlorum januam recludit, illisque vindictam Dei, et sempiternum supplicium edicit, vel publice excommunicatos ab Ecclesiæ gremio excludit."—Apol. Eccl. Ang.

same ground on which apostolic Christianity does so. When the reformed confessions enunciate, as the article of a falling or standing Church, that "we are justified by faith only," they intend not only to express, as has been already remarked, the inwardness of a justified state, or the fact that a conscious reliance upon the Saviour's merits, and not an external act of the Church, is the instrument of justification, but to affirm further that, by this conscious act of faith, the believer is at once, and without the intervention of any human mediator, made partaker of the saving efficacy of Christ's death. Faith connects us with the priestly office of Christ, both in its propitiatory and its intercessory aspect; through Him directly, and not mediately — "the new and living way" — we draw near to God, and enter the most holy place. Wherever justification by faith is held in its true Protestant sense, the doctrine of a human priesthood becomes a useless excrescence, and falls off of itself; for what need can he feel of a human mediator who already enjoys fellowship with God in and through Christ? Hence is to be explained the peculiar vehemence with which Romish writers have ever assailed this doctrine, and the misrepresentations to which in their hands it has been subject. The assailants must in many cases be too well acquainted with the writings of the reformers not to know that solifidianism, so far as the word expresses a tendency to laxity of practice, is as earnestly repudiated by the latter as by themselves: the animosity exhibited proceeds from a different source; and the Lutheran doctrine of justification is assailed not so much because it is thought dangerous to morality as because it robs the Church — that is, the clerical order — of its assumed priestly character. Hinc illæ lacrymæ. As the dogma of the corporate life makes the Church, not Christ, the author of spiritual life, so the doctrine of a human priesthood under the Gospel makes the clergy the arbiters of the Christian's destiny: for such surely they are to whom is given the power of barring, or opening, as they please, access to God. With an instinct which never errs, the advocates of the tridentine system feel that justification by faith, by which is simply meant that Christ in His priestly office is *present* instead of being represented by a sacerdotal order, is out of place in their doctrinal structure, and must either remain to mar its symmetry, or be expelled from it.

And this leads us to remark, in conclusion, that the sacerdotal principle may be actively at work where Romanism is not formally professed. Wherever statements are put forth to the effect

that the Church is the representative of Christ upon earth,—or, as Mochler expresses it, the perpetual incarnation of the Son of God—we have reason to suspect its existence. A moment's consideration will show that the notion of a proper human priesthood within the Church is the direct consequence of such a mode of speaking. The Church, it is said, as standing in the place of Christ upon earth, is invested with His offices, regal, prophetical, and priestly; and, by virtue of the latter, is empowered to mediate between man and God. But how can the Church, if that term be used, as Scripture uses it, to signify the *whole* of the body of Christ, or the *whole* of a local church, as the case may be, mediate between herself and God? A representative must be so to a third party, not to himself. The anomaly is evident; and, in truth, the theory never remains in its incipient stage, where it is harmless, because incapable of practical application. The Church, as is usual, very soon comes to mean the clergy, and it is only necessary to push the doctrine of representation one step further to make it appear that as the Church is the vicar of Christ upon earth, so the clergy are the representatives of the Church, and concentrate in themselves its royal, prophetical, and priestly functions. Once this point is gained, the doctrine of a human priesthood, whether we call it by that name or not, becomes inevitable. The Christian minister assumes the character of a mediator between God and the laity, and apart from his ministrations the ordinances of Christ, however lively the faith with which they are received, fail to convey covenanted grace. The people become an appendage of the priesthood, in whose hands all the vital powers of the Church are regarded as lodged. The priesthood, apart from the laity, retains its powers and privileges; but the laity, separate from the priesthood, become shrivelled branches, cut off from the true vine.

Such is ever the ultimate result of this theory. Hence it is the more important to mark, and withstand, its first advances. When Augustin said that "the dove" forgives sins, he was advancing a proposition which contained within itself all the elements of the Romish doctrine of the priesthood; for how can "the dove" (the body of Christ) forgive sins, save through its organs and representatives, the clergy? who thus become the dispensers of the treasures of heaven, opening and shutting, binding and loosing, as they will.

In no respect can the Church be properly said to be the representative of Christ upon earth. For this is equivalent to saying that Christ having accomplished the work of redemption and

ascended into heaven, has withdrawn from the active administration of the kingdom of God upon earth, having previously delegated the authority belonging to him to a priestly caste, the representatives of his representative, through which alone He ordinarily communicates with His people. A more unscriptural notion cannot be conceived. Christ has not withdrawn from His church, or delegated to its pastors His own incommunicable powers. "Vicarius est absentis, Christus est præsens." In His own proper person, indeed, He is no longer present upon earth, but in His place the Comforter has come, and where the Spirit of Christ is, there is Christ himself. The Holy Spirit is the only real representative or vicar of Christ upon earth. By the exercise of His kingly power, Christ orders and disposes all things for the welfare of His people; by His Word and His Spirit He discharges amongst them His prophetical office; and if in His sacerdotal character—that is, as God and man united in one Person—He is at the right hand of God (the exercise of this office upon earth being incompatible with the nature of the Christian dispensation), yet, inasmuch as direct access to Him, as the perpetual High Priest of His Church, is opened to every Christian, He is virtually present also in His priestly function; for to say that all Christians are everywhere present to Christ is equivalent to saying that Christ is everywhere present to them: the Deity of our High Priest renders Him omnipresent.

That the vicarious theory is incompatible with the hearty recognition of this great truth of Christ's presence amongst His people is too evident to permit us to entertain any doubts upon the point. Experience has amply proved that where the Church is regarded as the impersonation of Christ upon earth, the Sun of Righteousness speedily disappears behind the intervening body, and His life-giving beams are intercepted. The Church in every point becomes the proximate object of view, and the real source of salvation. If Christ is still supposed to work, it is only indirectly through the Church. Hence it is that what Protestants mean by faith can find no place in the Church theory. Faith, according to the teaching of the reformed churches, is a conscious reliance upon a present Person; but in the Church system the divine Person who is the proper object of faith is not present; the Church occupies His place, and the demand that we rely upon the Church in the same sense as we should upon Christ himself has not yet been made even by the theologians of Trent. The ingenious reasonings by which it is sometimes attempted to be proved

that by justifying faith our Lord and St. Paul mean, an intellectual belief of the doctrines of Christianity, or the Christian religion itself, or the whole congeries of Christian virtues,—any thing, in short, but what it does actually mean in Scripture,—viz. such an acceptance of the word of promise as leads to trust in a Person—are all prompted by the secret consciousness, that the Person upon whom faith should fix is withdrawn from view, nothing being left in His place but the dreary abstraction of the church.

If the Protestantism of the reformation were disfigured by far greater errors than it is, we should still owe an incalculable debt of gratitude to Luther and his contemporaries, for their services in removing the opaque veil which had been interposed between the Saviour and His people, and once more permitting the glory of Christ to be seen by man.

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

CHURCH PRINCIPLES ILLUSTRATED FROM THE WRITINGS OF CYPRIAN AND AUGUSTIN.

Amidst the many painful circumstances which have marked the course of the recent theological movement in the Church of England, one good result, the importance of which it is impossible to overrate, has followed from it,—viz. a juster appreciation, than perhaps we ever before had, of the character and tendency of the patristic theology of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. The phase which the religious revolution of the 16th century assumed in England, as compared with that which marked its rise and progress abroad, tended to invest the period of Church history just named with a peculiar interest and importance in the eyes of the English reformers. While in Germany the reformation took its rise from a purely religious sentiment of which Luther was the representative and the mouth-piece, in England it partook more or less of a political character: or, perhaps, it is more correct to say that on the continent spiritual led to political emancipation from

the fetters of the Papacy, while, amongst ourselves, the overthrow of the doctrinal system of Rome was a consequence of the rejection of her assumed temporal authority. With the German reformers liberty to hold and to preach the Gospel, with the English national independence, was the proximate object contended for; though in neither case could the attainment of it be barren of ulterior results. Justification by faith, as distinguished from the sacramental, and pelagian, system which had corrupted the Church to its core, formed the mainspring, and the watchword, of the reformation abroad; with us the absolute sovereignty of nations was the great principle in the first instance asserted. Luther protested principally against the intervention of the Church between the individual believer and God; the English reformers against her usurpations over the state, or the doctrine of the supremacy of the Pope. It was the insolent assumption by an Italian prince of a right to depose princes, to absolve subjects from their oath of allegiance, and otherwise to interfere in the domestic concerns of the country, that impelled the English people, king, nobles, and commons, with a consent nearly unanimous, to shake off a yoke which to a free people had become intolerable.

This peculiar bias of the English reformation operated, as regards the interests of religion, both advantageously and the reverse. The national character which the circumstances just mentioned imparted to the movement enabled our reformers to retain the ancient polity of the Church unchanged, and to preserve the visible line of ministerial succession; advantages which the foreign Protestants were compelled, from the circumstances in which they were placed, to forego. On the other hand, the same circumstance tended to shift the ground of controversy between our divines and those of Rome from interior principles to their final results and visible exemplifications, thereby rendering it not so easy for future generations to maintain the field against the argumentative assaults of Rome. While Luther was compelled to appeal both from the papal divines and the fathers to Scripture alone, our reformers, while repudiating the Romish doctrine of tradition, announced it as their formal principle, that Scripture is to be understood according to the patristic interpretation of it, and that to restore the Church to what she was in the 3d and 4th centuries was the end to be aimed at in all attempts at reformation. To the adoption of this line of argument they were led by the advantage which they possessed of being able to point to an identity of form between the primitive polity of the Church and

that which they had succeeded in establishing in England. The Church of the 4th century was episcopal, and it had no formal pope: this also was the form which the Church of England had assumed: hence the temptation was presented to our divines, when assailed by Rome, to fall back upon patristic, instead of original—that is, scriptural—Christianity, and to rest the issue of the controversy upon the ascertained doctrines and practices of the early Church. It was "a short and easy method" with Rome to say, "Prove from the remains of Christian antiquity that the ancient Church held the doctrines of the supremacy of the Pope, of masses for the dead, and of purgatory, and we will allow your claims. We take our stand upon the Church of the 4th century." What made the temptation stronger was, that at that time Romish controversalists were wont to appeal to the fathers in support of the principal dogmas of their Church;* so that the celebrated challenge of Jewel was provoked, and justified, by the tactics of the adversary. Whether they have done wisely in abandoning this ground for the more elastic, but more dangerous, doctrine of development (dangerous even to themselves, for why may not Christianity develope beyond Romanism?) may be questioned.

It is quite true that it was only formally that the principle of the English reformation was enunciated to be a restoration of the Church according to the mind of the "primitive fathers," and that, materially, a very different standard of doctrine was adopted. While our reformers extolled the imagined purity of the Church of the 4th century, their actual teaching on the most important points of doctrine was as different from that of the fathers as any thing could well be, and presented a perfect coincidence with that of the great foreign reformers. With the fathers on their tongue, they were Lutherans at heart; and have indelibly impressed their convictions on the articles of the English Church. Nevertheless the formal enunciation of the principle alluded to has proved of serious injury to the cause of Apostolic Christianity amongst us. In the first place, it enabled the divines of a subsequent age, whose sympathies were far more with the patristic teaching than with that of the Protestant reformation, to obtain a footing in the Church of England, which they have ever since held, and from which no one can now wish to dislodge them; and thus has been introduced amongst us a type of doctrine, which, in essential points, is more Romish than Protestant. In the next place, it had the effect

* See the Romish Catechism, passim.

of diverting the attention of our divines from the great doctrinal points at issue between the reformed and the Romish Churches to others of a less fundamental character, or rather, as has been already observed, from the interior principles of the respective systems to their visible and prominent results, and, consequently, of rendering a great part of our anti-Romish theology more superficial than it would otherwise have been. Such a doctrine, for example, as that of the supremacy of the pope has been set forth as the great point of difference between ourselves and Rome, and learned men have been tempted to forget that, when they had disproved, as it was easy for them to do, the existence of a formal pope in the first four centuries, they had by no means exposed, or refuted, the erroneous notions on the subject of the Church, out of which the papacy by natural consequence sprang; whereas, in truth, the doctrine of the papal supremacy is but the exterior symptom of the unsoundness which lies deep within, and which, if the present papal system were swept away, would speedily throw out something similar. In a word, the visible tokens of the disease have been too often mistaken for the disease itself. And, lastly, it has tended, more perhaps than any other circumstance, to perpetuate most mistaken notions as regards the actual state of doctrine in the ancient Church. They who had staked the issue of the controversy with Rome on the recorded teaching of the Church in the 4th century were naturally indisposed to see any errors in that teaching, much less those very errors (in germ) against which they were protesting; hence the writings of our early divines convey, to say the least, a very imperfect view of ancient Christianity, and abound with expressions concerning it which are calculated to mislead the unwary, or unlearned, reader. On the one hand, they were tempted to quote isolated sentences of the fathers as specimens of their ordinary teaching, which they were very far from being; and on the other to shut their eyes to the unequivocal traces of Romish doctrine which are visible in the pages of Christian antiquity. It may be questioned, for example, whether on the very point on which our great writers —such as Barrow—have chosen to take issue with Rome, viz. the papal supremacy, due weight has been by them assigned to the statements of the early Latin fathers on the position which the see of Rome was even then beginning to occupy in western Christendom. Of what avails it to prove that the Bishop of Rome possessed, at that time, no formal jurisdiction over other bishops, if, notwithstanding, the *ideas* whence the papacy sprang were pre-

valent, and found strenuous advocates in the leading churchmen of the age?

It must be regarded as a singular mark of divine favour, that the principle on which our reformers *professed* to act was not formally incorporated in the articles of the English Church; that not Scripture as interpreted by the fathers, but Scripture itself, was set forth as the rule of faith by which even the Catholic creeds were to be tested, and their truth proved. For the assertion may be safely hazarded that hardly one of the distinctive doctrines of Romanism can be named, the rudiment of which cannot be traced to that very age of the Church which we had been taught to regard as the model for our imitation both in doctrine and in practice. Experience has over and over again proved how impossible it is to construct a system which shall fairly represent the teaching of the third and fourth centuries, and yet be materially different from that of the Council of Trent; *materially* different, for, as has been observed in the preceding pages, the great writers of that age recognised no other *formal* principle than that of Protestantism,—viz. the supreme authority of Holy Scripture in controversies of faith. The failure which has attended the attempts recently made amongst ourselves to frame an Anglican system, holding a midway position between Romanism and evangelical Protestantism, is notorious; the production, an insular one in every sense of the word, has, from the first, languished, and bids fair, ere long, to terminate its sickly existence. Indeed, the original authors of it have themselves pronounced the most significant comment on the result of their labours, by transferring their spiritual allegiance, one by one, to that Church which alone exhibits, in full and consistent operation, the characteristic features of the Church system.

In proportion as this is recognised, and Scripture really becomes to us what it was intended to be,—the sole authoritative record of apostolic Christianity, and the standard of Christian doctrine,—will be our success in withstanding the advances of Romanism, and reducing our own church to a closer conformity to the apostolic model. The fond notion that we can take up on patristic ground a tenable position against Rome will be abandoned, while our feet will be the more firmly planted on that rock of the divine Word which, when the argument has been made to rest exclusively upon it, has ever proved itself able to bear the weight, and opposed an insuperable barrier to the assaults of error.

To so desirable a result any contribution, however imperfect, must be held valuable; and it may be a fit conclusion to the pre-

ceding discussion, to present the reader with a brief sketch of the opinions prevalent on the subject of the Church in the third and fourth centuries; the period in which Christianity is supposed to have presented herself to the world in a garb of purity and brightness, which subsequent ages may imitate, but never can surpass.

The confined limits of a single chapter make it necessary to narrow the field of survey, and to select such portions of it as are most strongly marked with the characteristic features which it is our object to bring out to view. Hence, we may at once dismiss, as unfit for our purpose, the great writers of the eastern Church. With the exception of Ignatius, these writers dwell upon the theoretical, rather than the practical, side of Christianity; on the doctrines of the Gospel, rather than the nature and constitution of the Church. The dialectical spirit of the Greeks, in transferring itself from the speculations of heathen philosophy to Christian theology, found a congenial sphere of exercise in systematising the doctrines, and composing philosophical defences, of the faith; and satisfied with the laurels which they gained in this field, they left the practical system of the Church, in its discipline and government, to be worked out and reduced to practice by the less subtle, but more energetic, leaders of the western Church. It is to the works of the principal Latin fathers that we must have recourse, if we would become acquainted with the principles of the church system, and trace the successive steps by which it advanced to maturity. And among these the chief place, in laying the foundations of the ecclesiastical edifice, must be assigned to Cyprian and Augustin; the one the greatest prelate, the other the most influential writer, of his time; whose remains have ever formed the magazine whence the Catholic theory has drawn its weapons of argument and illustration. Besides the eminent position which these fathers occupied, and still occupy, in the Christian world, a peculiar interest attaches to the age in which they flourished, which may be termed the age of transition, or that in which the principles of which the Papacy is the final result became fixed; and the spirit of apostolic Christianity, as it breaks forth with striking effect, even in the pages of Tertullian, was at last overcome and supplanted by the ecclesiastical version of the Gospel. To the writings of Cyprian and Augustin, then, our attention will be confined, while we endeavour to ascertain the views which, in that age, had come to be generally entertained on the nature and functions of the Church.

1. What the conception of the Church was, which had begun

to prevail in the age of Cyprian and Augustin, will be best learned from some examples of the mode in which these fathers expound the predicates of the Constantinopolitan creed; especially those of oneness and unity.

The following are some of Cyprian's statements on the oneness, or exclusiveness, of the Church, taken from the remarkable tract "De Unitate Ecclesiæ." After observing that persecution is not the only danger to which the faith is exposed, and that the great enemy of souls frequently employs more subtle, but not less deadly, weapons, — viz. the exciting of heresies and schisms, which entrap and destroy the simple-minded, — he reminds those to whom he writes, that "there is but one church, which, with a fruitful increase, is spread abroad far and wide. So the rays of the sun, though many, issue from one parent luminary; the branches of a tree, however numerous, are all sustained by one trunk; and if the same fountain, through its abundant supply of water, feeds a multitude of rivulets, they are yet all connected by the singleness of the original spring. Attempt to separate a ray from the sun, and you will find that light cannot be divided; sever a branch from the tree, and it becomes fruitless; cut off a stream from the fountain, it dries up. In like manner the church of the Lord diffuses its rays throughout the world; but it is the same luminary that is everywhere present, and the unity of the body is not divided. With a rich exuberance she sends forth her boughs into the whole world, and pours forth, far and wide, her copious streams. Yet there is but one fountain, one origin, one mother, fruitful in successful procreation. In her womb we are conceived, by her milk we are nourished, by her spirit we are quickened. The spouse of Christ cannot be defiled; she is incorrupt and chaste. She knows but one home, one holy bridal-chamber . . . . . Whosoever is separated from the Church is united to a harlot, is cut off from the promises belonging to the Church. He cannot attain the rewards, who abandons the Church, of Christ. He is an alien, a profane person, an enemy. He cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother. He who gathers save in the Church scatters. He who holds not the unity of the Church, holds not the law of God; holds not faith in the Father and the Son: holds not life and salvation. This sacrament of unity — this bond of an indissoluble concord — was prefigured by the unrent garment of Christ." (John, xix. 24.).

"Let no one think that good men can separate from the Church.

It is not the wheat, but the chaff, that the wind scatters; it is not the firm, but the feeble, tree that the storm overturns. A perverse mind, a perfidious love of discord, are the causes of all heresy, past and present. These are they who, without a divine commission, take upon themselves to preside over assemblies collected at random, and assume the name of bishops, while no one has conferred the episcopate upon them: whom the Holy Spirit, speaking in the Psalms, designates as pests and corrupters of the faith, deceitful as serpents, vomiting forth from their lips deadly poison. Whereas there is but one baptism, they conceive that they have a right to baptize. The fountain of life" (*i. e.* the baptism of the Church) "being deserted, they profess to administer the grace of the salutary, life-giving water; by their baptism, men are defiled, not washed; sins are accumulated, not purged away. That birth generates children of the devil, not of God. Born through a falsehood, they do not receive the promises consigned to faith. They cite, indeed, our Lord's words, 'Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst;' but how can two or three be gathered in the name of Christ, when they are severed from Him, and from his gospel . . . . What peace, then, can the enemies of the brethren promise themselves; what sacrifices can the rivals of the priests believe that they offer? Can they suppose that Christ is present in their assemblies, seeing they assemble outside the pale of the Church? The sin of such persons is not purged, even by their being slain for confessing the name of Christ; the inexpiable guilt of schism is not washed away, even by suffering. He cannot be a martyr who is not in the Church. Though they give themselves to the flames, or to the wild beasts, their sufferings are not the crown of faith, but the punishment of perfidy; not the glorious exit of religious valour, but a death of despair . . . . . We must separate ourselves, or rather fly, from such delinquents, lest, putting in our lot with them, and wandering from the right way through the paths of error, we should be involved in the same guilt. There is but one God, one Christ, one Church of Christ, one faith, and one Christian people, joined by the cement of concord into a compact unity of the body. This unity cannot be broken, nor can the one body be rent asunder. He, whoever he may be, who secedes from the maternal womb, cannot breathe or live apart; he loses the substance of salvation."*

That sentiments of this kind are by no means peculiar to the

* Cyp. De Unit. Eccles.

book on the unity of the Church, the readers of Cyprian well know: similar ones are found scattered throughout the whole body of his epistles. To take a few examples at random:—to Magnus, who had consulted him, whether they whom Novatian had baptized in schism should, on their reconciliation, be rebaptized, Cyprian replies that, in his opinion, they ought to be so; for that Novatian's baptism, administered as it was by one not in communion with the Church, was no real baptism. "Our Lord Jesus Christ," he says, "when he declared that they who are not with Him are against Him, did not specify any particular kind of heresy, but pronounced all such, without exception, to be His adversaries. So the blessed apostle John has made no distinction between one heresy or schism and another; but designates all equally who had seceded from the Church, and opposed themselves to it, antichrists (1 John, ii. 18, 19). Whence it is clear, that all who can be proved to have separated themselves from the unity and charity of the Catholic Church must be regarded as enemies of the Lord, and antichrists. It is written, 'But if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican;' now if they who despise the Church are to be treated as heathens and publicans, much more must they be so who, in a hostile and rebellious spirit, establish false altars, an illicit priesthood, and sacrilegious sacrifices . . . . . If any one should reply that Novatian acknowledges the same law which the Catholic Church does, baptizes with the same creed, worships the same God,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and on this account may assume the power of baptizing, let him know that to us and schismatics there is not the same law, nor the same baptismal interrogation. For when they say, 'dost thou believe in the remission of sins, and eternal life through the Holy Church,' they speak falsely in their interrogation, inasmuch as they have not the Church (amongst them)."* To the same effect, animadverting on Stephen's opinion concerning the re-baptizing of heretics and schismatics, he writes to Pompeius: "What blindness, what obliquity of mind, not to acknowledge the unity of faith which has come to us from God the Father, and from the tradition of our Lord and God, Jesus Christ? For if, on this account, the Church is not among heretics, because it is one, and cannot be divided; and for the same reason they have not the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as He is one, and dwelleth not among profane persons and seceders; truly neither can baptism

* Epist. 76. Ad Mag.

be among such, for it cannot be disjoined, either from the Church or the Holy Spirit . . . . . What an assertion to make, that there can be sons of God who are not born in the Church!"* In a similar strain he discourses on the schismatical presbyters of the faction of Felicissimus: "They propound peace, who themselves do not possess it. Seceders from the Church themselves, they offer to reconcile the lapsed to the Church. There is one God, one Christ, one Church, and one chair, founded on the rock by the Word of the Lord. No altar can be erected, no priesthood established, besides the one altar and the one priesthood."†

It might have been thought that statements of this strong character were peculiar to Cyprian, and proceeded from the vehemence of his temperament, did we not possess, inserted in his works, an epistle from Firmilian, bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, in which precisely the same ground is taken. Firmilian sided with Cyprian in the baptismal controversy, and argues at length against the validity of that ordinance, when administered by persons outside the pale of the Church. "Heretics," he says, "when they secede from the Church, can possess no (spiritual) power nor grace, since all power and grace resides in the Church, where the elders preside, to whom is committed authority to baptize, to impose hands, and to ordain. For as it is not lawful for a heretic to ordain, so neither can he impose hands, baptize, or perform any holy and spiritual act, since he is a stranger to spiritual and heavenly sanctity . . . If the baptism of heretics can regenerate, they who are baptized amongst them must be regarded as sons of God, not heretics: for the second birth which is given in baptism, generates sons of God. But if the spouse of Christ, the Catholic Church, is one, it is she alone who generates sons of God . . . . . From the ark of Noah, which was a figure (sacramentum) of the Church of Christ, we learn to maintain the unity of the Church, as the apostle Peter expresses himself, 'The like figure whereunto even baptism doth save us;' showing, that as they who were not shut in with Noah perished in the waters; so now, whosoever is not in the Church with Christ perishes outside, unless he in penitence return to the one salutary bath (of baptism) . . . . But he (Stephen) urges, that the mere name of Christ greatly avails to hallow a baptism, so that, wherever he may be, he who is baptized in the name, receives immediately the grace, of Christ; forgetting that, if schismatical baptism avails to cleanse the man from sin,

* Epist. 74. Ad Pomp. † Epist. 40. Ad Pleb.

we must, by parity of reasoning, hold that imposition of hands by schismatics is valid to confer the Holy Ghost. And so whatever else is done among heretics will come to be deemed just and legitimate, provided it be done in the name of Christ; whereas you (Cyprian and his colleagues), in your epistle, have shown that the name of Christ is of avail only in the Church, to which alone Christ hath committed (the power of conferring) heavenly grace." *

If the moderation of tone, and circumspection of reasoning, characteristic of Augustin's writings, present a favourable contrast with those of the fervid Cyprian, it was not because the former was at all less deeply convinced of the truth and importance of the principles enunciated by his predecessor. While in controversy with the Donatists, he successfully vindicates the validity of baptism, by whomsoever administered, provided due matter and form were present, he was fully possessed with the idea of the body of Christ being a visible corporation, beyond the pale of which no saving grace could exist. In the following passages, this is either expressed or implied. "What does a sound faith, or haply an unmutilated sacrament of faith profit him, the integrity of whose charity is destroyed by the deadly wound of schism; by the loss of which (charity) alone, all else that he possesses is rendered unavailing to life eternal?" † "Whereas our predecessors maintained, that in the Catholic Church alone the Holy Spirit is, through the imposition of hands, given, their meaning was the same as that of the Apostle, when he says, that 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given us.' For that is the charity, or love, of which they are destitute who are severed from the communion of the Catholic Church; and on this account, even should they speak with the tongues of men or of angels, should they understand all mysteries and all knowledge, should they possess faith so as to remove mountains, distribute all their goods to the poor, and give their bodies to be burned, it profiteth them nothing. They possess not the love of God who love not the unity of the Church; and on this account it is rightly affirmed, that the Holy Spirit is not received, save in the Catholic Church . . . . . There are many operations of the Spirit enumerated by the same apostle, who thus concludes: 'All these worketh one and the same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.' Since, then, the sacrament, which even a Simon Magus could receive, is one thing, the opera-

* Epist. Firmil. (Epist. Cyp. 71.). † De Bap. Cont. Don. l. i. s. 11.

tion of that Spirit which is the property only of the good, another; whatever heretics and schismatics may receive, charity, which covers a multitude of sins, is the peculiar gift of Catholic unity . . . . . beyond the pale of which the aforesaid charity exists not, and without it everything else, though it may be recognised and approved, cannot profit or deliver."* "While the integrity of the sacrament (of baptism) is to be acknowledged wherever it is administered, it must be remembered, that, beyond the unity of the Church, it avails not to remission of sins."† "The comparison of the Church to the garden of Eden signifies to us, that without her pale men may receive her baptism indeed, but can neither receive nor retain the bliss of salvation. The baptism of the Church may be elsewhere, but only within the Church is the gift of eternal life to be found."‡ "To salvation and life eternal, no one can attain who holds not Christ the head. But no one can hold Christ the head, who is not in communion with His body, the Church."§ "Within that threshing-floor (of the Church), there may be both good and bad; outside it there cannot be good."‖

The mixture of truth and error which the foregoing citations, which faithfully represent the teaching of these two eminent fathers on the subject under discussion, contain, must strike every reader. That there is no salvation out of that Church which is composed of Christ's living members; that every one who belongs not to it is, whatever be his religious profession, without hope, and without God in the world; that beyond its pale, no real Christians are found, is beyond doubt: but this is far from being the meaning of Cyprian and Augustin. The Church, within which alone salvation is to be found, was, in their view, the visible society, or societies, in communion with the Catholic bishops, to union with which they conceived a sacramental efficacy to be attached, which imparted to the religious acts performed within its pale an acceptableness in the sight of God, which they would not otherwise have possessed. Though not all within this consecrated pale was Christ's, yet beyond it there were not, and could not be, any in life-giving union with Him; the faith which schismatics professed, however orthodox, becoming, in their case, inefficacious to salvation; the sacraments, however celebrated "according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity

* De Bap. Cont. Don. l. iii. s. 21.
† Ibid. l. iii. s. 22.
‡ Ibid. l. iv. s. 1.
§ De Unit. Eccles. s. 49.
‖ De Unic. Bap. s. 30.

are requisite to the same," failing to convey covenanted grace; and what appeared to be the fruits of the Spirit, being nothing better than counterfeit imitations. To what results such principles must, and did in fact, lead, it is needless to remark. What is most difficult to account for is, the unquestioning confidence with which they were received and maintained by so diligent a student of Scripture as Augustin, to whom it never appears to have occurred to examine on what grounds the saving grace of Christ was absolutely confined to the visible Catholic Church, or a sacramental virtue connected with a particular line of ministerial succession. Why did he not recollect that the rule which he himself lays down in reference to the sacraments is applicable to other things also: "Sicut ergo et intus quod diaboli est arguendum est, sic et foris quod Christi est agnoscendum est. An extra unitatem ecclesiæ non habet sua Christus, et in unitate ecclesiæ habet sua diabolus?" (De Bap. cont. Don. l. iv. s. 13.) But it is only given to a few to rise superior to the errors and prejudices of the age in which they live.

In proportion as the doctrine of the exclusiveness of the Church advanced to maturity, did that of its unity assume a fixed and concrete form. To affirm, that beyond the pale of the visible church there is no salvation, would have been unmeaning, did no means exist of clearly defining the boundaries of the sacred inclosure. On this point, the early fathers speak nearly as indeterminately as Scripture itself. To the simple scriptural unities—"one faith, one Lord, one baptism, one God and Father of all"—Tertullian adds, only, however, as a guarantee for soundness of doctrine, a community of descent from apostles, or apostolical churches; and inculcates among all branches of the visible church, which should be found to agree in these particulars, the duties of brotherly love and mutual recognition.* True it is, that when he comes to define more closely how a church is to prove its apostolical origin, he insists particularly upon the succession of bishops from the first; but even while enlarging on this point, he gives the preference to apostolicity of doctrine. "If any of the

* Dehinc in orbem profecti (Apostoli) eandem doctrinam ejusdem fidei nationibus promulgaverunt, et proinde ecclesias apud unamquamque civitatem condiderunt, a quibus traducem fidei et semina doctrinæ cæteræ exinde ecclesiæ mutuatæ sunt, et quotidie mutuantur ut ecclesiæ fiant. Ac per hoc et ipsæ Apostolicæ deputantur, ut soboles Apostolicarum ecclesiarum. Omne genus ad originem suam censeatur necesse est. Itaque tot et tantæ ecclesiæ, una est illa ab Apostolis prima, ex qua omnes. Sic omnes prima et Apostolicæ, dum una omnes probant unitatem: dum est illis communicatio pacis, et appellatio fraternitatis, et contesseratio hospitalitatis.—De Præscrip. Hæret. s. 20.

heretical sects," he says, "should venture to ascribe themselves to the age of the Apostles, in order that they may appear to be of apostolical origin, we reply;—let them exhibit the first foundation of their churches; let them declare the series of their bishops so from the commencement descending by succession, that the first of such bishops had some one of the Apostles, or of their contemporaries, for his predecessor . . . . . But even should they feign something of this kind, it will profit them nothing. For their doctrine, when compared with the apostolical, proves by its discrepancy therefrom, that it had for its author, neither an Apostle, nor an apostolical man: for as the Apostles could not have taught contrary to each other, so the apostolical men cannot be supposed to have taught contrary to the Apostles. By a reference to this standard, they (the heretics) can be tested even by those churches which, being lately founded, cannot produce, as their author, either an Apostle or an apostolical man; which, however, professing as they do the same faith, are, on account of affinity of doctrine, not the less entitled to the name of apostolical."* But in the age of Cyprian, when sects began to make their appearance, which in doctrine, and even in polity, agreed with the genuine traditions of the Apostles, the simpler theory of Tertullian became inapplicable, and a more stringent definition of the unity of the Church was needed, to distinguish the latter from the folds of heresy. And now commenced the effort to invest the organic unity of Christ's body, which, as has been more than once observed, is, in its primary state, inward and spiritual, with a corresponding outward form; an effort in itself natural and laudable, but which, from the principles assumed throughout the process, produced in the end evils of a serious character. The episcopalian theory of Cyprian was the first step in advance. However the dissident bodies might profess the orthodox faith, and retain the apostolical polity of episcopacy, they had separated from the communion of the Catholic bishops—the bishops, that is, who could trace their origin in an uninterrupted line of succession to the Apostles,—and established an episcopate of their own: upon this defect in their system, therefore, Cyprian took his stand, and strenuously inculcated the dogma, that the legitimate episcopal chair is in each church the divinely appointed repository of the "Sacrament of Unity." "I say these things," he writes to Florentius Pupianus, "not in a spirit of boasting, but of grief, inas-

* De Præscrip. Hæret.

much as you constitute yourself the judge of God and of Christ, who declares to His apostles, and through them to all bishops who are the legitimate successors of the Apostles, 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that heareth me, heareth Him that sent me. He that rejects you, rejects me, and Him that sent me.' For hence it is, that schisms and heresies spring up,—viz. from a presumptuous despising of the bishop, who alone presides over the Church; as if he who is honoured by the divine approval is to be deemed unworthy of (ruling over) men. . . . . Although a contumacious band of unruly spirits may depart, the Church never separates from Christ; and they are the Church who cleave to their priest and pastor (the bishop). You ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop; so that if any one be not with the bishop, he is not in the Church."* "An intolerable grief oppresses me, ever since I heard that you" (the confessors at Rome) "had, contrary to the rule of the Church, to Christ's law, and to the principles of Catholic unity, given your consent to the appointment of another bishop (Novatian), that is, to the establishment of another Church, and the division of Christ's members."† "Throughout the successive lapses of time, the custom of the Church, in the ordination of bishops, has so descended, that the Church has appeared founded on its bishops, and by them, as rulers, every act has been directed."‡ "The Church is one, and therefore cannot be within and without, at the same time. If it is with Novatian, it cannot have been with Cornelius. But if it was with Cornelius, who, by a legitimate ordination, succeeded Fabian in the episcopal chair, Novatian is not in the Church, nor can he be deemed a bishop, who, setting at nought the divine and apostolical tradition, took his origin from himself and succeeded to no one."§

That the principle of ecclesiastical unity in each diocese resides in the Catholic bishop—so that all who were not in communion with him were to be regarded as outside the Church—was an intelligible rule, and, as a test of church-membership, easily applied; but how was the whole church throughout the world, consisting as it did of a number of independent societies, each under its own bishop, to realize and exhibit its unity? To meet this difficulty, Cyprian propounded his well-known theory of the unity of the episcopal office in the abstract, however multiplied might be its living representatives. "There is one undivided

* Ad Flor. Pup. Epist. 69
† Ad Confess. Rom. Epist. 44.
‡ Ad Lapsos, Epist. 27.
§ Ad Magnum, Epist. 76.

episcopate, which becomes visible in the person of each individual bishop (cujus a singulis in solidum pars tenetur)."* "There is one episcopate, diffused everywhere by the harmonious multiplicity of bishops."† "For this cause, dear brother, has the vast body of the priests (bishops) been united by the cement of mutual concord and unity, that if any one of our order should introduce heresy, and lacerate the Church of Christ, the rest might render succour, and, like compassionate shepherds, gather the Lord's sheep into the fold."‡ It soon, however, suggested itself to Cyprian — as, indeed, it must to any mind of ordinary acuteness — that this abstract view of the unity of the universal episcopate was but ill fitted for practical purposes, and that, to produce an impression on men's minds, the idea must be clothed with flesh and blood. The unity of the episcopate must see itself visibly represented: the abstract notion must become a concrete fact. The principle being established, that bishops hold the same place in the Church which the Apostles formerly did, it was not difficult to discover the required visible centre of unity. Cyprian observed — what indeed is evident — that Scripture ascribes to the apostle Peter an undefined pre-eminence amongst his brethren of the apostolic college; a position which the words of Christ addressed to him in Matt. xvi. 19. seem to foretel that he should occupy. Substituting for Peter, the occupant for the time being of the episcopal chair at Rome, with which city the Apostle was supposed to have had a peculiar connection, and for the apostolic college the episcopate of later times, Cyprian found what he wanted, and, in a number of remarkable passages, gives sufficient evidence of the point to which theological reflection was tending. A few of them will be sufficient to illustrate his train of thought. "This" (schism and its evils) "takes place from men's not recurring to the fountain-head of truth, and the doctrine of our heavenly Master. There is no need of prolix argument; the proof is short, and easy of comprehension. The Lord says to Peter, 'Thou art Peter,' &c.; and again, 'Feed my sheep.' Upon him alone He builds His Church, to him he commits His sheep to be fed. And although, after his resurrection, he invests all the Apostles with equal power, saying to them, 'As the Father hath sent me,' &c., yet, that he might exhibit (the principle of) unity, He, by His authority, so disposed matters, that that unity should take its beginning from one (Peter). All the Apostles, indeed, were what

* De Unit. Eccles. p. 397. (Edit. Baluz.). † Ad Anton. Epist. 52.
‡ Ad Steph. Epist. 67.

Peter was,—endowed with an equal share of honour and power; but Christ begins with one, and the primacy is assigned to Peter, in order that it may be shown that there is one Church, and one chair . . . . . Of this Church, how can he be supposed to hold the faith, who holds not the unity? How can he who resists the Church (who deserts the chair of Peter, upon whom the Church is founded), hope that he is in the Church?"* "Where, and by whom, remission of sins is given is plain. For to Peter first, upon whom the Lord founded the Church, and from whom he derived the origin of unity, was committed a power of remitting on earth sins which should be remitted in heaven. And after his resurrection, He declared to all the Apostles, 'As the Father hath sent,' &c."† "In addition to their former misdeeds, they (the schismatics), having appointed a pseudo-bishop for themselves, dare to repair to Rome, and to the chair of Peter, the chief church, whence the unity of the priesthood (sacerdotalis unitas) took its rise."‡ "Those who took their journey to you (Cornelius), we exhorted that they would acknowledge, and hold fast by, the root and mother of the Catholic Church (the Church of Rome) . . . . . We directed letters to be sent throughout our province, exhorting all our colleagues to ratify your election, and steadfastly to maintain fellowship and union with you,—that is, with the Catholic Church itself."§ Moehler, while granting to the Protestant that the texts cited from Scripture to prove the primacy of the bishop of Rome are insufficient for the purpose, may well point to such passages as the foregoing, as evidence sufficient that, even so early as the third century, "the Pope was but waiting a summons to make his appearance."‖

2. If from the conception of the Church which the writings of Cyprian and Augustin exhibit, we pass to the functions with which they invest it, the evidence on which we must assign a very early origin to the errors of Rome becomes still more decisive. The theory which they propound, or tacitly assume, is precisely that of Trent,—viz. that the Church is the inheritress of the prerogatives, royal, priestly, and prophetical, which Scripture assigns to the Saviour, and presents herself to men as the vicar and representative of Christ upon earth, the repository, and even the source,

* De Unit. Eccles. It is right to mention that the words inclosed in brackets, "qui cathedram Petri, super quem fundata est ecclesiæ deserit," are by Baluzius adjudged to be an interpolation.—See his remarks ad loc.

† Ad Jubajan. Epist. 73.

‡ Epist. 55. Ad Cornel.

§ Epist. 45. Ad Cornel.

‖ Einheit in der Kirche, p. 247

of all grace. The human instrument throws into the shade the divine agent, and Christ is virtually deposed from his mediatorial throne.

Thus, as regards the communication of regenerating grace, Cyprian's ordinary mode of speaking may be collected from the following passages:—"The Lord invites those who thirst to come and drink of the living water which flows from Him. Whither then is he who thirsts to betake himself? To the heretics, among whom the fountain of living water exists not, or to the one Church, which upon one (Peter), who received the keys of it, was by the word of the Lord founded? This is that one Church which possesses the whole power of her spouse and Lord . . . . . Those who in Samaria believed were baptized within the pale of the Church, to which alone it has been granted to communicate the grace of baptism and remission of sins."* "But if the birth of baptism confers regeneration, how can heresy, which is not the bride of Christ, generate sons of God? It is the Church alone which, being united to Christ, spiritually generates sons, according to the apostle's observation,—'Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.' .... Since the new birth of Christians takes place in baptism, but the regenerating and sanctifying power of baptism is with the bride of Christ, who alone can spiritually generate sons to God, how can he have God for his father who has not the Church for his mother?"† "It is manifest that they who are not in the Church must be numbered among the (spiritually) dead, . . . since there is one Church, to which the gift of eternal life has been vouchsafed, which eternally lives, and which quickens the people of God."‡ So Firmilian, in his epistle to Cyprian: "The second birth which takes place in baptism generates sons of God. But if there is but one spouse of Christ,—viz. the Catholic Church,—she alone it is that generates sons of God. . . . . You have shown in your epistle that the name of Christ avails only in the Church, to which alone Christ has vouchsafed the power of (imparting) divine grace."§ Augustin follows in the steps of his predecessor. "The Church forsooth brings forth by baptism all (who are brought forth), whether it be from her own womb, or from that of her handmaid" (the schismatical bodies.)‖ In like manner, remission of sins is by both fathers made the prerogative

* Epist. 73. Ad Jubajan.
† Epist. 74. Ad Pomp.
‡ Epist. 71. Ad Quint.
§ Firm. Epist.
‖ De Bap. cont. Don. l. i. s. 23.

of the Church. "The dove," says Augustin, "remits" (sins.) Cyprian's version of the article of the Apostles' creed on the forgiveness of sins—"I believe in the forgiveness of sins through the Holy church"*—has been already noticed: whatever may be its value in a critical point of view, it sufficiently indicates the theological tendencies of the writer.

But to affirm in the abstract that the Church possesses the power of generating sons of God, and forgiving sins, is obviously to leave the theory incomplete; for where is this Church, and by what organs does she act? It has been observed in the foregoing pages that in such expressions as these the Church really means the clergy; and in fact, the pages of Cyprian afford abundant proof of the facility with which the abstract passes into the concrete, and the representatives of the Church come to stand in the place of the Church itself. By this father the Catholic bishops, and by commission from him the rest of the clergy, are habitually spoken of as the specific channels through which the grace of Christ is conveyed to His people. "In this (Church) we (the bishops) preside; for its honour and unity we contend; its grace and glory we with faithful devotion defend. We, by divine permission, water the thirsty people of God; we guard the boundaries of the vital fountain (baptism). Why, then, for maintaining the right of our possession, should we be deemed violators of unity?"† "The power of remitting sins," writes Firmilian, "was given to the apostles, and to those churches which they, being sent by Christ, founded, and to the bishops who, by vicarious ordination, succeeded them."‡ The same thing is expressed, or implied, in a numbers of passages, which at the same time show how nearly Cyprian approached to the Romish doctrine of priestly intention. "The Scripture says, 'Abstain from strange water, and drink not from a strange fountain. In order, therefore, that the water of baptism may wash sin away, it is necessary that it be cleansed and sanctified by the priest. . . . But how can he cleanse the water who himself is unclean, and destitute of the Spirit? Or how can he by baptism convey to another remission of sins, whose own sins, as being those of a schismatic, are not remitted?"§ "Who is there of any maturity of wisdom in the Church who would maintain that the mere invocation of the names (of the Trinity) suffices to the remission of sins and the sanctifying of baptism, when every one knows that this

* Epist. 70. Ad Jan. See also Epist. 76. Ad Mag.

† Epist 73. Ad Jubajan. ‡ Epist. Firmil. § Epist. 70. Ad Januar.

is of avail when he also who baptizes has the Holy Spirit (and not otherwise)?"* "Whereas the sins of each person are remitted in baptism, the Lord in his gospel teaches us that they can be remitted by those alone who have the Holy Spirit."† "Can he give water from the fountains of the Church who himself is not in the Church? Can he convey the salutary draughts of Paradise (baptism) who, perverse, and self-condemned, withers with eternal drought outside the Church?"‡ "I (Cyprian) remit all kinds of sin; even those committed against God I examine not with the full rigour of judicial inquiry. By remitting sins more than I ought I almost make myself a transgressor."§ "Let each of you, I entreat, confess his sin, while life is yet his; while confession is available; while satisfaction and remission effected through the priests (facta per sacerdotes) is acceptable with God."‖

From the passages already cited, it will easily be surmised that in Cyprian's and Augustin's theology the sacraments hold a prominent, if not an exclusive, place. In point of fact, what in modern times has been termed the sacramental system appears, especially in Cyprian's writings, in full maturity of growth. In Cyprian's view the application of Christ's merits to the saving of the individual is effected by a series of ordinances, committed to the custody of the Church, — that is, the clergy, — each of which has a specific grace attached to it not to be obtained through any other channel. For example, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to extract from Cyprian's works a single passage in which the Word, and its correlative faith, are made to bear any part in the process of regeneration: it is baptism, and baptism alone, to which the salutary change is ever ascribed.¶ Baptism confers the new birth; delivers from spiritual death; makes men sons of God and Christ's sheep (baptizandus est ut ovis fiat; quia una est aqua in ecclesia sancta quæ oves faciat); and is the door to eternal life.** The imposition of episcopal hands, or confirmation, which Cyprian more than once calls a sacrament,†† carries on the work begun in

* Epist. Firmil. † Epist. 76. Ad Mag. ‡ Epist. 73. Ad Jub.

§ Epist. 55. Ad Cornel. ‖ Lib. De Lap.

¶ On this point Augustin, as usual, speaks more scripturally than Cyprian. "Forma Sacramenti datur per Baptismum; forma justitiæ per Evangelium."— Cont. Lit. Pet. l. iii. s. 68.

** Epp. 52. 63. 71. 73.

†† "De eo vel maxime tibi scribendum . . . . eos qui sint foris extra ecclesiam tincti . . . . . quando ad nos atque ad ecclesiam quæ una est, venerint, baptizari oportere, eo quod parum sit eis manum imponere ad accipiendum Spiritum Sanctum, nisi accipiant et ecclesiæ baptismum. Tunc enim demum plene sanctificari et esse filii Dei possint, si sacramento utroque nascantur."— Epist. 72. Ad Steph. Compare Epist. 73.

baptism; the eucharist is a safeguard against the assaults of every enemy;* and a penitential discipline restores the lapsed.† The power of faith, or a conscious reliance upon the merits of Christ, in securing the blessings of redemption, the leading doctrine of St. Paul, is nowhere recognised by Cyprian; and even of Augustin the same must be said. Perhaps, however, the most striking proof of the undue prominence which the theology of the age had begun to assign to the sacraments, is derived from Cyprian's mode of interpreting certain passages of the Old Testament. In the river which watered the garden of Eden;‡ in the purifying lustrations of the law;§ in the numerous passages of the prophets which describe the blessings of the Gospel under the figure of water;‖ and in Christ's address to the woman of Samaria, and invitation to all that are athirst to come unto him and drink (John, vii. 37.);¶ Cyprian sees nothing but allusions to the sacrament of baptism. "As often," he says, "as water by itself is mentioned in Scripture, it is baptism that is meant;** as we see, for example, in Isaiah, xliii. 19. ('I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.') In this passage, God, through the prophet, predicted that in places which formerly had been without water streams should abound, and water the elect people of God, — that is, those who are made sons of God by the generation of baptism. So in another place it is foretold that the Jews, if athirst for Christ, should come to us and drink, — that is, should obtain the grace of baptism: — 'He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.' (Isaiah, xlviii. 21.)" Of the Eucharist, too, the Jewish scriptures are, according to Cyprian, full. He discovers prophetical intimations of this sacrament in Noah's drinking wine; in the bread and wine of Melchisedech; in the description of wisdom in the book of Proverbs, killing her beasts and mingling her wine; in the prophecy of Jacob respecting Judah,

* "Ut quos excitamus et hortamur ad prœlium non inermes et nudos relinquamus, sed protectione sanguinis et corporis Christi muniamus; et cum ad hoc fiat eucharistia ut possit accipientibus esse tutela, quos tutos esse contra adversarium volumus, munimento dominicæ saturitatis armemur."—Epist. 54. Ad Cornel.

† See the book De Lapsis, passim.

‡ Epist. 73.

§ Epist. 76. Ad Mag.

‖ Epist. 70. Ad Jan.

¶ Epist. 63. Ad Cæcil.

** Augustin's more perspicacious intellect taught him the fallacy of this rule. "Non enim semper ubia quam nominat Scriptura, hoc visibile Baptismi sacramentum vult intelligi; sed aliquando ipsum, aliquando aliud. Jam enim hoc visibili Baptismo etiam alios discipuli Domini baptizaverant, antequam veniret in eos secundum ejus promissionem Spiritus Sanctus: de quo tamen idem Jesus dicit, 'Si quis sitit, veniat et bibat' . . . . Ecce aquam dicit Spiritum, qui nondum erat datus, cum jam aquâ illâ baptismi multis fuisset data."—De Unit. Eccles. s. 65.

that he should wash "his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes;" and in Isaiah, lxiii. 3., "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?" The whole epistle (No. 63.) in which these expositions meet us should be perused by all who entertain exaggerated notions of the taste and sagacity of the early fathers as interpreters of Scripture.

The tendency of the church system to invest the ministers of Christ with a sacerdotal character, is especially visible in the unconscious manner in which Cyprian and Augustin transfer into the Gospel the terms of the Law. The reader need hardly be informed that with them the ordinary designation of the Christian minister is *sacerdos*, or sacrificing priest; or that priestly functions are constantly ascribed to him. When Cyprian would exhibit in all its enormity the sin of schism, his chief illustrations are drawn from the cases of Korah, and Uzziah, under the old covenant;* while his exhortations to yield obedience to the catholic bishop are founded on the passages in Deuteronomy which inculcate obedience to the priest for the time being.† And as the Christian ministry becomes a priesthood, so the eucharist assumes the character of a proper sacrifice, and that not only for the living but for the dead. Speaking of the presumption of certain of the lapsed, Cyprian says:—"These (divine warnings) being despised, before their sins have been expiated, before confession has been made and their conscience cleansed by the sacrifice and hand of the priest, before the wrath of God has been appeased, they violently invade the body and blood of Christ."‡ "I hear that certain presbyters, neither mindful of the Gospel nor of the honour due to the bishop and his chair, have begun to communicate with the lapsed, and to offer (the sacrifice) for them, and to deliver to them the eucharist, whereas these privileges should have been attained in regular order."§ Again:—"For them" (the martyrs mentioned just before) "we continually offer sacrifices, as often as we celebrate the anniversaries of the passion of the martyrs."‖ Cyprian and his brother bishops had made a rule that no presbyter should be appointed to the office of guardian to the children of a deceased brother, the clergy being bound to devote themselves "to the altar and sacrifices, prayer and supplication:" the penalty in case of disobedience was, that "no offering should be made for him"

* De Unit. Eccles. † Epist. 55. Ad Cornel. ‡ Lib de Lap.
§ Epist. 11. Ad Pleb. Compare Epist. 10. Ad Mart. ‖ Epist. 34. Ad Cler.

(the transgressor deceased), "nor any sacrifice celebrated for his repose."*

Finally, the doctrine of satisfaction, is by Cyprian, inculcated with a fulness and power of language, to which subsequent ages could add but little. Perhaps of all that occurs in his writings to perplex the biblical Christian, his expressions on this point are the most startling: they prove how completely the doctrine of justification by faith, in St. Paul's and Luther's sense of that expression, had been superseded by another gospel, which is not another. Let the reader weigh the following statements, and say whether the decisions of Trent do not rather fall short of than exceed them. "I wonder that some should be so self-willed as to maintain that place for repentance should not be allowed to the lapsed, and pardon to the penitent, when it is written, 'Remember whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do the first works;' words which, it is evident, were addressed to one who had fallen, and whom the Lord exhorts to rise again, by means of good works. For it is written, 'Alms-giving delivers from death' (Tob. 4.); not, indeed, from that death which the blood of Christ hath once for all abolished, and from which the salutary grace of baptism, and that of our Redeemer, hath freed us, but from that which is the consequence of subsequent transgression . . . . . O mockery of our brethren! to exhort them to lament, and pour forth tears, to groan day and night; and, for the purpose of washing away their sins, to work frequently and abundantly, and after all to refuse them the peace of the Church."† Speaking of Fortunatus and Felicissimus, who had communicated with the lapsed, before the latter had obtained the peace of the Church, he says:—"Not to mention their other delinquencies, they hinder the lapsed from making supplication to God, who testifies that He is provoked. They forbid that Christ should be propitiated by prayers and satisfactions. They use every means to prevent the redemption of sin by satisfactions and due lamentations, and the cleansing of its deadly wounds by tears (of repentance) . . . . . The first grade of happiness is never to have sinned; the second is to acknowledge our sins. In the one case, innocence remains unsullied; in the other, there is a remedy for guilt. But these (the schismatics) have, through the just anger of God, incurred the loss of both; so that

* "Censuerunt (episcopi) ne quis frater excedens ad tutelam vel curam clericum nominaret, ac si quis hoc fecisset, non offerretur pro eo, nec sacrificium pro dormitione ejus celebraretur." He adds, "Neque enim apud altare Dei meretur nominari in sacerdotum prece qui ab altari sacerdotes et ministros voluit avocare."—Epist. 67. Ad Cler.

† Epist. 52. Ad Anton.

they possess neither the sanctifying grace of baptism, nor the remedial aid of penitence by which guilt is healed."* In another epistle, Cyprian mentions that Therapius had been reproved by his colleagues, for granting peace to one Victor, before the latter "had gone through the full course of penitence (or penance), and made satisfaction to God against whom he had sinned."† To the lapsed themselves, his exhortation is as follows:—"Do you, beloved, who retain a fear of God and a sense of your delinquency, survey with grief your transgressions, acknowledge the crime that weighs on your conscience, neither claiming as a right, nor despairing of, pardoning mercy. If God is a loving Father, so is He also a judge to be feared. The greater our sins, the greater ought to be our repentance. To the healing of a deep wound, a long medicinal process is necessary. Let not your penitence be less than your sin has been. Thinkest thou that the Lord, whom thou hast perfidiously denied . . . can be quickly appeased? Thou must pray and entreat more earnestly, pass the day in grief, and the night in watching and tears; prostrate thyself on the ground, roll thyself in dust and filth; having lost Christ's garment, refuse all clothing; having tasted of the devil's food, choose fasting; press on with good works, by which sins are purged away; be abundant in alms-giving, by which souls are delivered from death. What remains of your property, apply to atone for your guilt without delay, and abundantly let the work go on; let all your income be expended on the healing of your wound, and lay up money at interest with the Lord, who is to judge us. So under the Apostles, faith flourished (!). If any one thus pray with all his heart, if he mourn with due penitential lamentations, if, by the unwearied performance of good works, he incline the Lord to pardon his sin —such an one may find mercy with Him who proclaims Himself to be merciful."‡ On this point chiefly it is that the Protestant fails to find in Augustin the mind of St. Paul. Admirably as this great light of the western church expounds other distinctive doctrines of the Gospel, on the power of Christ's blood, applied by faith, to cleanse fully and effectually from the guilt of sin, he is comparatively silent; nay, his expressions tend the other way. It is not without pain, that we hear him expounding the clause in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses," &c. as follows:—"This applies not to those sins which are remitted in the regeneration of baptism, but to those which, through the infirmity of our nature, we commit in daily life, for the healing of which the medi-

* Epist. 55. Ad Cornel. † Epist. 59. ‡ Lib. De Lap.

cines of alms-giving, of fastings, and of prayers, are to be applied, in order that what we say in prayer, we may act out in alms-giving."*

When once the efficacy of Christ's atonement is thus impaired by the admixture of human merit, it is but a short step to the worst errors of the Romish system. If good works are of such avail to restore the lapsed, why may not the meritorious actions of those who have never fallen be so multiplied as to exceed the demands of the divine law, and redound to the benefit of their less fortunate brethren; and if Christ's blood is not sufficient of itself to ensure the cleansing of the penitent while living, why should it have this effect in the case of those (*i. e.* all Christians) who pass out of this life with the stain of sin not completely effaced? It can be no matter of surprise to us, to find Cyprian pushing his theory to its ultimate results, and treading close upon the ground of works of supererogation, and of purgatory, if indeed he does not rather pass the boundary. "We believe that the merits and works of the martyrs are of great avail with the judge; but not until the day of judgment, when, after the dissolution of this world, Christ's people shall stand before his tribunal."† "It is one thing to stand over for pardon, another to attain to glory; one thing to be cast into prison, not to emerge thence till the uttermost farthing be paid, another to receive at once the reward of faith and valour; one thing to be, on account of our sins, purged and cleansed for a lengthened period by the torment of fire, another to have purged away all sin by suffering; one thing, lastly, to have our sentence suspended until the day of Christ, another to be at once crowned by the Lord."‡

Such, it is believed, is a fair representation of the teaching of the most influential church writers of the third and fourth centuries. That, in its main features, it is identical with that of Trent, it is not necessary to point out. The passages speak for themselves. The elements of the Romish theory are all present: it only needs time, and the consolidating influence of system, to mould them into an harmonious whole. The truths which we may, with great profit to ourselves, gather from a perusal of these early Christian writers are, that Romanism is far more ancient than the Council of Trent, and that the Protestant can maintain his ground against Rome on no other ground save that of genuine apostolical tradition, — viz. the writings of the apostles themselves.

* Cont. Epist. Parm. L. II. s. 20. † Lib. De Lap. ‡ Epist. 52. Ad Anton.

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